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JESSE HAWES, M.D.



# CAHABA.

*Ala,*

*A STORY OF*

CAPTIVE BOYS IN BLUE.

BY

JESSE HAWES, M.D.,

GREELEY, COL.,

FORMERLY OF 9TH ILL. CAV.

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NEW YORK:  
BURR PRINTING HOUSE,  
18 JACOB STREET.

1888

CAHABA.

A STORY OF

CAPTAIN BOYD IN BLUE.

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JESSE HAWES, M.D.

NEW YORK: J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.



NEW YORK:  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT & CO.  
12 NASSAU ST.



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# ERRATA.

Page 71, line 18, for "your" read "our."

" 259, " 16, " "Beewet" read "Barrett."

" 411, " 25, omit "more."

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## **To the Comrades**

Who sweltered in the tropical heat of summer and shivered in the cold rains of winter,  
whose days were passed in hunger and whose dreams were of food: who  
endured the plagues of smoke and vermin and disease: who at last,  
for nearly two days, stood knee deep in cold water, yet  
never for a moment faltered in their devotion to  
their country nor permitted a murmur  
against its motives or its  
methods, this  
volume is

## **Affectionately Dedicated**

By one who recalls the memory of such men with pride and  
tenderness.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

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NO war of modern times has been more important to the people engaged in it, to their present and especially their future, than our war of the Rebellion. No war was ever so productive of histories and narratives by its participants, and it is equally certain that no histories or reminiscences are so eagerly read by the people of our country as are those based upon our great conflict of a quarter of a century ago.

Every chapter that can throw any light upon the actors and scenes of those disturbed and anxious times possesses a most fascinating interest to the generation that has grown up since the contest ceased, as well as to those whose memory extends through the whole period of its existence.

A truthful index of this feeling is the fact that the most rapid growth made by any large periodical in America dates from the time of its entering upon the publication of a series of articles written by the most prominent Federal and Confederate leaders and devoted to the actions in which they took a part.



To satisfy this intellectual hunger and thirst for information, a history of every large army has been written, a chronicle of every important campaign, a narration of every prominent battle. Reminiscences of several of the great prisons of the South and North have appeared, and have been of the most absorbing interest. The consideration given to the history of our country should be regarded with pleasure by every patriotic person, for a knowledge of history teaches patriotism. Those who cherished a strong regard for the unity and perpetuity of our nation before its life was so seriously threatened have esteemed it of greater value since—its value has been enhanced by its cost. Every life sacrificed, every limb lost, every hour of pain or anguish, every day passed in the gloom of the prison by those who sought to preserve the nation from destruction, made it of more value to its admirers, and a record of the facts are a proper sequel to the facts themselves.

One large prison of the Confederacy, so far, has been but barely mentioned—that at Cahaba (pronounced Ca-haw-bah), Ala. In a report upon the prisons of the Confederacy, made by a Congressional committee shortly after the close of the Rebellion, less than five pages are to be found relative to Cahaba, and of these the greater part are transcribed reports from Confederate archives.

To fill in this important chapter in the history

of the great struggle for the preservation of the Union is the object of this volume. Incidentally, the pages following are an humble monument to the endurance, the patience, the fortitude, the unswerving loyalty and patriotism of that class of men who, numerically, constituted the great mass of the army—its non-commissioned officers and privates.

The virtues and courage and intellect and strategy of our leaders have been painted in the brightest colors (though, in the estimation of us, their followers, none too bright), and we would add to, not detract from their fame, so richly merited. But the heroism, endurance, and steadfastness of those humbler actors in the great drama—that fearful tragedy—have never been so conspicuously portrayed. The sacrifice made by them, by reason of their youth on entering the service, was often incalculable in amount. A large quota of their numbers left the school-room to don the blue of the soldier. Had they been older, the foundation by education for a more useful life had been laid, and their losses from this source less. It was a great sacrifice to exchange the four years planned to be passed in college for the four years in military camps. It was a sacrifice, too, of no small amount to give up for a time one's personal identity. The civil law regards one man as the equal of another and every man a sovereign; military law compels the private soldier to become an unreasoning part of a

great machine, known by a number, not to think—to do as ordered only.

“Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die.”

When captivity became the common lot of the soldier with rank and the soldier without, the commissioned chieftain was given his parole and granted a semi-freedom, while his humbler followers were hurried to the stockade and guarded enclosure already crowded.

These facts are recalled in no spirit of fault-finding or hateful cynicism; they were inevitable and could not be changed; not even the humblest, thoughtful private should for a moment wish them changed; but a recollection of these facts fills us with gratitude toward those who so patiently bore their self-imposed burdens, and the glow of an honest pride may properly flush the cheek of him who, as a boy or man, was the private soldier twenty-five years ago.

The intelligent private soldier early in his military life knew what captivity implied to him, and any record which truthfully tells of how he bore its ills, with not a murmur against his Government, with no thought of deserting his standard, when the inducements for doing so were so great, is a worthy monument to his steadfastness and an index of the stern

stuff of which the common soldiers of our army were composed.

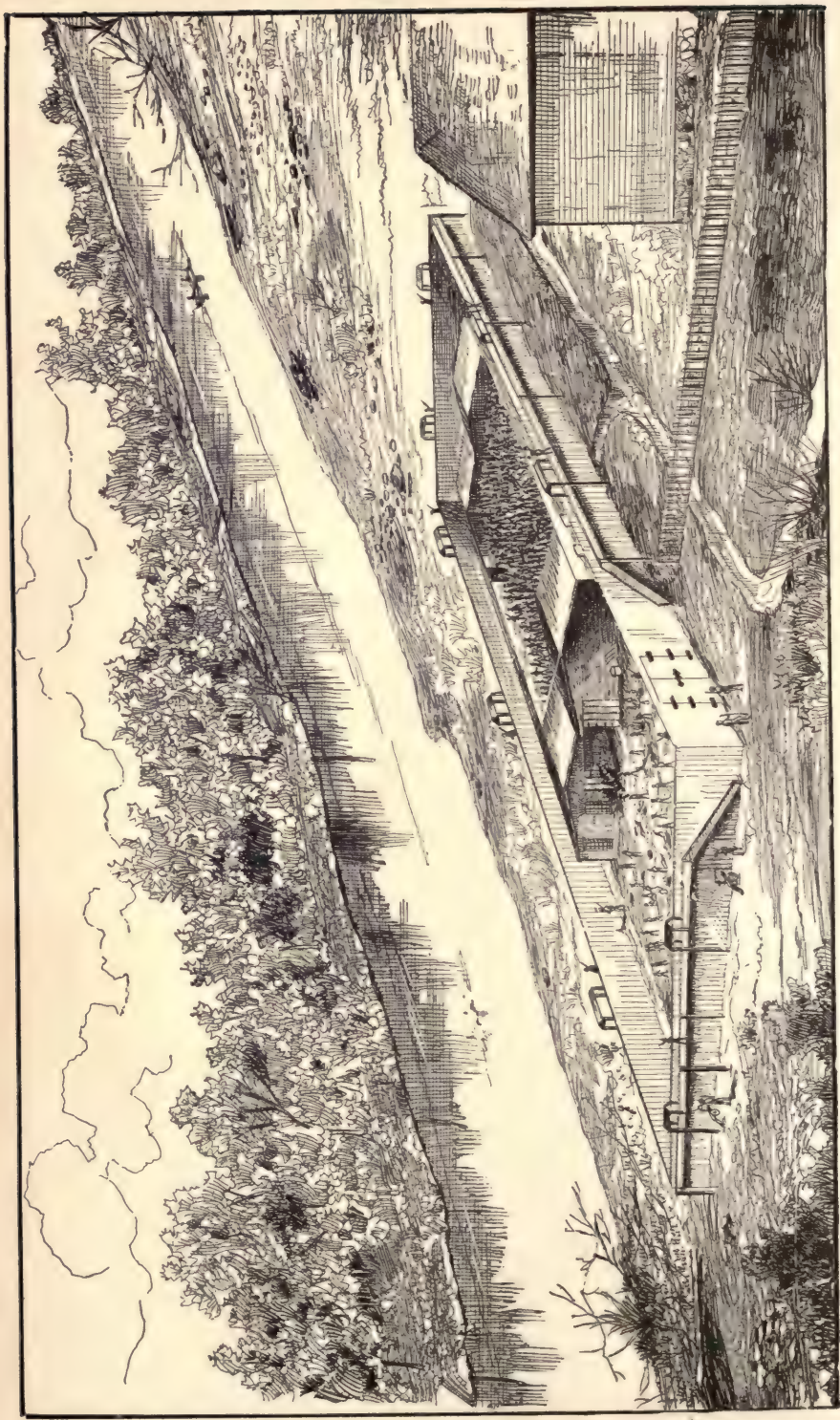
We would emphatically assert that the story of misery and wretchedness and long suffering, which necessarily is a prominent feature in the history of any prison, is not intended to awaken the animosities of other times. Such an object, even if desired, can never be and should never be attained. "The war is over," and with the great majority of those who in it were actors, North and South, I trust—as it is with the writer of this—the spirit of vengeance is dead, and has been so long buried as to have changed to something nobler.

This is simply history, with no partisan object, no vindictive purpose, no desire to reflect upon the honesty of purpose of the great masses of people who offered their lives in defence of the doctrine of State Rights. The results of the war, the logic of events, the strong personal friendships and high esteem grown up between a multitude of individuals who were formerly contestants, the long years that have elapsed, have rendered acrimonious discussion out of place. The men of the North and South who risked *most* in the great war have little desire to fight over the battles of their younger days. The majority of the Southern men who were "in the trenches" I believe are satisfied, some perhaps are even glad, that their efforts were not crowned with success; and while their average North-



ern former adversary does not underestimate the grandeur of the cause for which he fought, he is glad to meet them more than half way on the plane of reconciliation, and hopes the future shall see both "touching elbows" in the work of building up a great and noble nation.





CASTLE MORGAN, CAHABA, ALA., 1863-65. DRAWN FROM MEMORY BY THE AUTHOR.

# CAHABA.

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## CHAPTER I.

CAHABA, THE FIRST CAPITAL OF ALABAMA, A CENTRE OF CULTURE, WEALTH, AND ENERGY—ITS NATURAL ADVANTAGES—THE REMOVAL OF THE CAPITAL, FOLLOWED BY THE DECAY OF THE TOWN—ITS CONDITION TO-DAY.

A HISTORY of Cahaba can be now written which shall embrace its whole life, for within the span of this century it has arisen, flourished, and decayed. Cahaba to-day is a city of the past—only ruins are left to mark its site.

Sixty-eight years ago, when the State of Alabama was admitted into the Union, a site for the capital was selected on the west bank of the Alabama River, a hundred and thirty miles northeast from Mobile, fifty miles southwest from Montgomery. This place, situated at the point where the Alabama and Cahaba rivers unite, was called Cahaba. It was also made



the seat of Dallas County, a vast fertile territory of nine hundred and fifty square miles. Here were elements of prosperity—two navigable rivers, a great rich country, and a delightful climate. Cahaba was fast to improve. Streets were laid out, pavements put down, a State-house, Governor's mansion, court-house, and jail erected. Residences, business houses, hotels, warehouses, schools, churches, a Masonic lodge-room, theatre, and bank followed in rapid succession. Artesian wells were bored and bridges built, and a railroad and telegraph added to the grandeur of the brilliant young capital. Accomplished professors, doctors of divinity, skilled physicians, profound lawyers, astute politicians, gifted editors, and live merchants sprang up, as if Cahaba was the creature of Aladdin's lamp. And there were typical planters with scores of plantations and thousands of slaves worth millions of money. Here came ambitious senators and representatives from all parts of the State to make laws and perform other and various duties for their country's good, and learned lawyers to further their clients' causes in the State courts. Society people came to enjoy the pleasures of the place. Gorgeous carriages with liveried servants sped along the streets bearing occupants dressed in "purple and fine linen." Grand balls and luxuriant banquets succeeded each other. Massive wagons, groaning under the weight of plantation products, poured in from every direction; palatial steamers dis-

charged cargoes of rich merchandise at the wharf, and went away loaded down with cotton.

Cahaba grew to be five thousand strong, and a centre of politics, of law, of learning, of religion, of trade, of agriculture, and of fashion. Cahaba had a proud career for forty years—flashed upon the world like a meteor, rushed along a blazing path, and passed away forever.

Cahaba's bar was an enviable one. In its early days were such prominent men as Reuben Safford, sixteen years on the Supreme Bench, and finally Chief Justice; Horatio G. Perry, Judge of the Circuit Court and State Senator; G. W. Gayle, United States District-Attorney and member of the House; Jesse Beene, member of the House; Robert S. Hatcher, Senator and member of the House; George R. Evans, member of the House; and Colonel Lawrence E. Dawson, one of the brightest men in the State. Later along was the distinguished William L. Yancey, member of Congress, framer of the articles of secession, Confederate Minister to Great Britain, and member of the Confederate Senate. And along with him were C. C. Pegues, Colonel of the Fifth Alabama Infantry, killed at Gaines Mill, Va.; John S. Hunter, Judge of the Circuit Court, member of the House and of the Senate, and an orator of considerable note; P. P. Wood, present Judge of the Probate Court; Brigadier-General John Tyler Morgan, now United States

Senator; Judge James L. Evans, Thomas J. Portis, Jay Gould's attorney in St. Louis; Judge B. F. Safold, of the Supreme Court; Colonel David S. Troy, now of the Montgomery bar; Judge Raynor, Brigadier-General Edmund W. Pettus, C. A. S., and Colonel N. H. R. Dawson, late Speaker of the Alabama House of Representatives. The last two mentioned were partners, and are now practising together in Selma. General Pettus will be remembered in connection with the fall of Vicksburg. Colonel Dawson married a daughter of the late Robert S. Todd, of Lexington, Ky., and in consequence was a brother-in-law of President Lincoln and of General Benjamin Hardin Helm.

Among the physicians were the learned Dr. E. G. Ulmer, who wrote a valuable work on malaria, and the equally able Drs. Hustis and English, and Dr. Thomas Casey, nine years a State Senator. Dr. Saltmarsh was a wealthy citizen and Register of the Land Office.

The list of opulent planters embraced Joel E. Matthews, who owned one thousand slaves and was worth more than one million dollars; his brother, Charles L. Matthews, a millionaire, and two other brothers, both of whom were wealthy; Hon. Robert S. Hatcher, and many others.

Edward M. Perine was the merchant prince of the place, but Colonel Samuel M. Hill and others occupied high mercantile positions.

The ministry did not suffer in comparison with the other professions and other callings. Dr. Smythe was a prominent Presbyterian divine, and Rev. J. L. Cotton stood high in the Methodist pulpit. The well-known George F. Cushman, D.D., now of New York, was rector of the Episcopal Church. This church was erected after plans by Mr. Upjohn, a New York architect; had stained-glass windows and a fine organ. The first church built in Cahaba was the Pantheon, in which all denominations worshipped, but was early succeeded by Presbyterian, Methodist, and Episcopal churches. The Female Academy cost twenty thousand dollars. Of the several newspapers, the *Dallas Gazette* ranked highest; and Hon. Jesse Beene and Hon. William L. Yancey were the foremost editors.

Frederick Wolfe was a resident of Cahaba—he is now the manager of the powerful Ehrlanger railroad syndicate in the United States.

The residences of Cahaba were, many of them, costly ones. The Crocheron House cost ten thousand dollars, the Barker House twenty thousand dollars, and the Perine mansion fifty-five or sixty thousand dollars. These three yet stand, but a number of other important ones have been pulled down.

An artesian well in the yard of the Perine house is twelve inches in diameter and eight hundred feet deep. It was a wonder in its day, spouting like the



Beehive geyser of Yellowstone Park. Sir Charles Lyell, the geologist, made a visit to Cahaba to see this well, while on a tour of the United States; and Millard Fillmore also came to see it. This well was bored for a factory, but the idea of a factory was abandoned. It yet flows, as also does a smaller one near it.

The Dallas Hotel ranked with the best in the South.

The telegraph line was the first erected in the State. It came from Mobile and continued to Montgomery. The people of Selma, eight miles distant, were for years compelled to come here to send a telegram.

Seven years had scarcely elapsed when the capital was removed. Railroads were built that cut off her support. Selma grew up and drew away much of Cahaba's business and population, and even many of the fine houses were removed thither. The city dwindled to a lifeless village, and as such the war of 1861 found it. A slightly increased activity was given it in 1863, when the old brick cotton shed of Colonel Samuel M. Hill was transformed into a prison for captured Federals, and a small body of Confederate troops were stationed there as prison guards.

It remained the county seat of Dallas County, however, until 1866, when that prestige was taken from it and removed, like so many others preceding it, to Selma; then the last vestige of

its former splendor and activity departed. To-day only two or three poor white families and a few negroes are the representatives of Alabama's first capital.

Let us visit it to-day — twenty-two years after the close of the war.

Here we are at the crossing of Main and First streets. Look around you. See yon broken columns and shattered pilasters like unto ancient Thebes? The grass, the briars, and the weeds grow in the streets and the pavements are sunken. Here on the corner is a little store, and another small one kept by a blind man. Across there is a corn-mill in the courthouse, and this is all there is of Cahaba's business. Perhaps two dozen people in all are left of that splendid array of five thousand that lived here in the long ago. But behold the remainder of that block. Look at the long row of closed doors and barred shutters. Those counters and shelves within that once held costly wares and fabrics now hold but dust. Those stairways that led up to offices of profound jurists and able journalists are vacant and decayed. Turn your eyes to the other side of the street. A mass of *débris*!

There stands a lazy mule, with ragged saddle, in front of what was once a merchant's palace, where of old were wont to stand royal carriages with spirited teams. Now let us walk down Main Street. On the

left there is the court-house. It has grown old. An ugly smoke-stack protrudes from the roof. Where the gifted sons of Solon, Justinian, and Blackstone discharged volumes of forensic lore at intelligent juries, and grave judges sat with solemn mien, now harshly whirl the noisy wheels. That rubbish in the rear is what remains of a strong jail. Let us proceed. Here in the street is an artesian well, still pouring forth its water. Taste of the water ; 'tis mawkish and sulphurous ; it suggests that even the crust of earth beneath the dead city is stricken with decay. On the corner here to the right you can see a faint trace of the famous Dallas Hotel. What broad proportions ! But its towering form, pompous proprietor, tapestried halls, glittering plate, white-aproned servants, and crowds of guests are gone. Out on Second Street, there you see the theatre in process of demolition ; and the Masonic lodge-room is soon to share the same fate. Now we go farther. Here is a man ploughing in an old yard. In that yard once stood the pretentious residence of Dr. Ulmer, the skilled surgeon. Over on the left you see a grove of cedars. Among them stood the Episcopal Church, a model of architectural beauty. It has been removed—taken away to a distant village. Now we come to the grass-grown grade of the railroad. The depot down by the wharf is no more ; the telegraph line pulled down, the ties rotted, the trestle-work fallen, and the rails hauled

to other fields. Yes, six or eight miles of the track, out to the junction westward, were literally torn up and that much of the road abandoned. An old blind horse nips scanty grass where the iron horse used to rush along.

A few steps more and we have reached the site of the State-house. Long years ago it was pulled down. Listen to the weird clank of that old cowbell where once poured forth the enchanting notes of the silvery-tongued orators. 'What a fall was there! what a leap from the sublime to the ridiculous!

But we pass on by a tumbled-down school-house, by ruins and remains, by those stately pines, along that avenue of oaks, over yon viaduct and into the spacious grounds that surround the stately edifice that looms up like some castle on the Rhine. It is the Perine mansion, a place once owned by a merchant prince, who, stripped of fortune and of friends, now clerks in a store elsewhere on a precarious salary, while his castle is owned by Eastern creditors. We are at the gate; but oh, what a change from the palace that was reared within the memory of that old white-haired negro who is dozing and smoking in the cool shade yonder. The fence is dilapidated, the gate creaks sullenly ajar, the drives and walks, once pebbled, curbed, and hedged, are now but dim outlines in the weeds. The holly, the pomegranate, the mock-orange, the myrtle, and the magnolia are overwhelmed by



baser growths. We reach the door and stand on the broken pavement before the moss-grown marble steps, at the foot of the ivy-clung, balconied tower. We ascend the steps and touch the pearl-handled bell that you may hear its musical tones, for there is none to answer it. We enter. What vacancy, what silence ! How hollow our footsteps reverberate through the frescoed halls ! Rooms, rooms, a labyrinth of rooms ! Come into the parlor—a grand double parlor with sixteen hundred square feet of floor, divided by folding-doors, Corinthian columns, and panels of exquisite workmanship. Look upon these lovely marble mantels carved in Italy, and glance up at the beautiful ceilings. Within these gay walls, upon this expanse of floor, the devotees of Terpsichore moved to the voluptuous swell of an orchestra's music. Friends of the owner came by the score and remained by the week, as was the Southern custom, for in those days he "bore a bounteous purse." Now we go through corridors, by niches, nooks, alcoves, and colonnades to the rear portico. The light streams in through the ground-glass panes as we approach the door. A friendly ash stretches its limbs half across the portico. We pause to glance at the waters from the mammoth artesian well as they meander down a serpentine outlet through what was once a handsome flower-garden. The flower-pit, so empty, seems like a deserted tomb. There stand the servants' quarters and

carriage-house and stables. But let us re-enter and wend our way into the dining-hall and into the pantries, where were stored the luxuries of a lordly table. All are deserted. There goes an owl through a broken window and here clings a bat. There in the kitchen is the gigantic range still intact. Now must we find our way up one of the several stairways, through numerous chambers, over piles of plaster fallen from decayed ceilings, and go into the tower. Now by a flight of steps we climb higher, where twelve massive chimneys with gilded rods rear their proud forms like giant guardians with spears. Up, up to the tower's top. Grand but melancholy view! The placid Alabama "goes on forever," but her proud steamers know no longer the wharf. The deep and sullen Cahaba runs yet the same, but its bridge is down. Spires and towers and domes point heavenward, but their bells are hushed. Churches and schools and residences and storehouses stand there as of yore, but their once bright roofs are dull with rust. Streets and drives and walks are visible, but no one moves therein.

Such is Cahaba to-day.

Cahaba is dead. Will a day of resurrection ever come to her?

To one who visited the place but recently am I indebted for a picture of her in her loneliness.

## CHAPTER II.

CASTLE MORGAN—AN OLD COTTON SHED, DILAPIDATED AND UNUSED—NAMED FOR THE KENTUCKY RAIDER—ITS DIMENSIONS—REPORT OF CONFEDERATE SURGEON WHITFIELD UPON ITS CROWDED CONDITION AND ITS ABOMINABLE WATER—THE CONFEDERATE INSPECTOR-GENERAL CHILTON ALSO ENTERS A COMPLAINT REGARDING THE MANAGEMENT AND ABUSES OF THE PRISON—INMATES OF THE PRISON WHEN THE AUTHOR ENTERED—MAJORITY CAPTURED FROM THE COMMAND OF STURGIS.

WHILE Castle Morgan—the name given to the prison at Cahaba, in honor of the daring Confederate raider — may have been used in emergencies as early as 1862 for the retention of small squads of Federal prisoners, I have been able to find in the official papers of the Confederate Government no mention of it earlier than the fall of 1863. The idea of locating the great prison of the South at Cahaba, Ala., instead of Andersonville, Ga., had been advocated by a few Confederate leaders, but at the time a location was decided upon, Andersonville was the most secure place in the South.

The prison had been an old cotton and corn shed—the property of Colonel Samuel Hill—located but a rod or two from the banks of the Alabama River.

Colonel Hill, in the palmy days of Alabama's first capital, had been one of the leading merchants of the city, and had used the building in carrying on his lucrative business, but for many years previous to the civil war Cahaba, as a business centre, had been abandoned. The large warehouse was unused, except as a refuge for troops of gigantic rats, whose ancestors had kept their homes for many years within and beneath the walls of the building.

The walls of the structure were about fourteen feet high, thick and strong. A roof at one time had covered all portions of it, but the warring elements had stripped half of the roof away and had corroded innumerable holes through the remainder. It had been so long unused, that there was no incentive to repair the damage done by the years of rain and wind and sun. So poor were the accommodations it offered to its inmates, that as late as March, 1864, the Confederate Surgeon, R. M. Whitfield, who was in charge of the prison, in making his monthly report to the Medical Director, P. B. Scott, M.D., at Demopolis, used the following language: "I have the honor to transmit to you with this my monthly report. When you know the sanitary condition of the prison you cannot be surprised at the large number of cases reported. A brick wall covered



by a leaky roof, with sixteen hundred feet of open space in its centre, four open windows, and the earth for the floor, constitutes the prison."

Concerning the size of this building I have found in Confederate reports upon prisons a considerable discrepancy, and desirous of being exact in the matter, a few years ago I wrote to a former inhabitant of Cahaba, an ex-Confederate, of whose honor, truth, and carefulness there could be no question, requesting that a careful measurement of the building should be made, and in reply was told that an exact measurement gave as its length one hundred and ninety-three (193) feet, its breadth one hundred and sixteen (116) feet, measured on the outside. I was informed that the building had been largely torn down, but of its foundation enough remained to leave no question regarding the surface it enclosed.

A little more than one half of the roof remained on the building through the last years of the war, and while it protected a portion of its inmates from the sultry summer's sun it was but an indifferent protection in many places from the numerous cold rains of winter.

In the early part of 1864, in February or March, five or six large multiple bunks were placed in the prison. These, by most of our men, were called not bunks, but "roosts," as they presented to their occupants about the same comforts that chicken roosts

would give. Each roost consisted of four or five tiers of rough boards placed one above the other, with spaces between each tier of about thirty inches. The upright timbers of the roosts were four inches square, ten feet long, and separated from each other about seven feet. These upright pieces were fastened to each other by cross-pieces, and upon this framework were laid the rough boards upon which the men were to sleep. There was neither straw nor bedding of any kind. In the report of Dr. Whitfield, quoted from above, he states that through the winter of 1863 and 1864 the prisoners would average about two blankets to each five men, but through the following winter this estimate would be excessive. Upon each roost, packed like sardines in a box, could be stowed away from sixty to eighty men, according to the height and length of the roost. During the summer of 1864 there were added to the number of the roosts enough to make them nine in all, and capable of furnishing lying-down room to about six hundred persons. During the winter of 1864 and 1865 the remaining twenty-five hundred made their beds upon the ground.

A subdivision of the prison was made by an L-shaped wall in the northeast portion; this embraced about one eighth of the whole prison enclosure, and was entirely covered by the leaky roof. In no essential respect, however, did this subdivision differ from the remainder of the enclosure. Probably when the

shed was used for mercantile purposes the larger division was used for storing cotton, while the smaller part was used for storing merchandise less bulky. A large opening, perhaps at some time closed by a board partition, made the smaller enclosure a portion of the larger. There was but one place of entrance to the shed : this was on the north side of the building, and had been made when the shed was erected sufficiently large to permit a great plantation wagon loaded high with cotton to enter.

While the water-supply of Castle Morgan was fairly abundant, since it came from an artesian well of the town a few blocks away from the prison, it was, unfortunately, warm, of a sweetish taste, and impregnated with a sulphur gas (sulphuretted hydrogen), strongly suggestive of eggs "too ripe."

To many of the inmates the water was nauseating and cathartic ; if, however, we could have been assured of its purity the objections to it would have been fewer. Doubtless, the majority of those who drank it attributed all bad tastes to the mineral with which it was known to be impregnated, but from the report of Confederate Surgeon Whitfield, mentioned above, I quote the following : "The supply of water for drinking, cooking, and bathing, as well as for washing, is conveyed from an artesian well along an open street gutter for two hundred yards, thence under the street into the prison. In its course it is subjected to the wash-

ings of the hands, feet, faces, and heads of soldiers, citizens, and negroes ; in it are rinsed buckets, tubs, and spittoons of groceries, offices, and hospitals ; in it can be found the filth from hogs, dogs, cows, and horses, and filth of all kinds from the street and other sources."

Further on in his report Surgeon Whitfield takes occasion to complain of the inefficiency of the quartermasters at Cahaba, in the following language : "The two quartermasters at this post, with only the prison and one small hospital to supply, have failed to be equal to the task of having this prison supplied with good and sufficient wood, water, and bunks, and putting it in a condition in which it would be moderately comfortable, clean, and healthy. It is only useless to remark that I have made repeated complaints . . . to have these defects remedied." (See Report of R. M. Whitfield, Surgeon C. S. A., found in Confederate Archives, published in Congressional Report upon Prisoners of War to 3d Session of 40th Congress, page 737.)

I was told that after the exposure was made of this filthy method of supplying water, a partial remedying of the evil was undertaken. I trust it was—it certainly needed it—and I wish it could be proven that Surgeon Whitfield was in his reports an exaggerator.

In a report to Colonel R. H. Chilton, Inspector-General C. S. A., made by Lieutenant-Colonel D. T.



Chandler, on October 16th, 1864, a similar complaint is made, from which it appears that the management of Castle Morgan did not meet with the approval of all Confederate officers.

The water entered the prison through a covered trough, or pipe, passing under the west wall near its centre. This trough was covered within the prison until it reached nearly the centre, where a ditch a foot deep, two or three feet wide, and twenty or thirty feet in length, was excavated. Sunk in the ditch were two barrels, placed on their ends, separated from each other by a few feet, with the upper ends open; water remained in the ditch at all times a foot in depth and in the barrels was deeper.

At the east end of the ditch the water again entered a covered box, by which it was conveyed under the east wall and beneath the water-closet, which was placed outside of and against the brick wall, but enclosed by the stockade. The water-closet, placed against the outside of the prison wall on the southeast corner, was about fifteen feet long, eight feet wide, and nine feet high, its top covered by a "shed" roof—*i. e.*, a roof sloping downward from the brick wall to the outer wall of the closet.

The waste water from the inside of the prison passed in an open box beneath the seat of the water-closet, and served as a vehicle to carry away the fecal dregs. The open box extended only a foot or two beyond the

walls of the privy, then its contents passed in an open ditch directly to the river. At the point where the ditch passed through the stockade, instead of planks or split logs placed close together, as in all other parts of the stockade, there were placed vertically small spruce or pine saplings, only three or four inches in diameter, of the same height as the remainder of the stockade, and separated from each other by a space of a few inches. This arrangement of the saplings assisted several persons in escaping over the stockade during the months of our confinement. It was possible to climb the saplings, but it was almost if not wholly impossible to climb over the stockade at any other point. The walls and floor of the water-closet were planks two inches thick, placed close together at the time it was built, but shrunken by drying, so that cracks a half inch wide existed between the planks. The thickness of the planks was the means of saving the life of one of my messmates a few weeks after we entered the place.

When the old cotton shed was built earth was drawn into it to level up its floor, and in this way it chanced that the surface of the ground enclosed by the privy was two or three feet below the earth floor of the prison and the plank floor of the privy. This circumstance permitted the escape of the writer and two other persons from Castle Morgan a few days after their entrance.

In April, 1864, the stockade about the prison was

completed. This was composed mainly of two-inch planks placed three feet in the ground and twelve feet above ground. On the east, south, and west sides the stockade was about twelve to fifteen feet distant from the brick wall ; on the north side it was farther away, and some time in August this yard, on the north side, was enlarged so that from that time after it embraced a space about seventy-five by one hundred and forty feet. This yard was used only in the day and for the purposes of cooking. At night all inmates were retired to the brick enclosure. Guards were placed on the inside of the brick wall, in all numbering about a dozen ; one was at the door of the water-closet, whose duty it was to see that no person escaped through that place, two were at the large door of the main entrance during the night, but not there during the day.

At night one or more was placed between the brick wall and the stockade, and one was occasionally placed on a remaining portion of the roof, where it was easy to watch almost unobserved nearly all transactions going on among the prisoners.

Two or three pieces of artillery pushed their forbidding noses through little openings in the stockade surrounding the cook-yard, and other pieces were said to command the prison from another side. A detail of men stood always near the artillery, while a double guard and a body of armed men, off duty, were always outside the outer gate.

Later in the fall a walk was placed about the stockade on its outer surface near its top, upon which armed sentries paced at all hours of the day and night, but this addition to its safeguards as a prison was not made until after August.

The writer first saw Castle Morgan July 26th, 1864, and found on entering it about three hundred men, one half of whom owed their capture to the criminal blunder and cowardice of General S. D. Sturgis at the time of the "Guntown Disaster;" the remainder had been captured in an innumerable number of skirmishes and small engagements all the way between New Orleans, Mobile, Vicksburg, Memphis, Nashville, and Chattanooga. The stories of their capture and experiences, as related to the writer by many of the prisoners in after months, were most interesting and thrilling, and if collected in a volume would be more wonderful than the vivid imagination of the novelist usually portrays; but while such a collection is not within the scope of this volume, as a sample of the experiences of many, the writer will in the following chapter detail the matters that fell under his own observation at the time of his capture, and would suggest that they fairly represent the experiences of the three hundred who preceded him at Castle Morgan.



## CHAPTER III.

MILITARY OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTHWEST—SHERMAN—SOOY SMITH—BANKS—STURGIS—BATTLE OF GUNTOWN—THE WRETCHED CRIMINAL MANAGEMENT OF STURGIS INSURES DEFEAT.

TO explain the causes that led up to the expedition of General A. J. Smith to Tupelo, Miss., July, 1864, upon which expedition it was the ill-fortune of the author to be made a captive, let us go back and glance at the Confederate and Federal operations in the Mississippi Valley during that spring and summer.

Previous to the middle of July there certainly was little for the Federal forces to be proud of. An expedition, under command of General W. Sooy Smith, starting from near Memphis, Tenn., moved south along the Mobile and Ohio Railroad until it arrived at West Point, Miss. Its objective point was Meridian, Miss., nearly one hundred miles farther south, where General W. T. Sherman had already arrived from Vicksburg.

On February 20th Smith was met by what he supposed to be the combined forces of Forrest, S. D. Lee, and Chalmers, whose numbers he judged to be

greatly superior to his own and comparatively fresh. Feeling himself unable, with his supposed inferior force, and encumbered as it was with a large train of negroes who had flocked to him, to cope with his adversaries, he ordered a retreat. He was new to our command, and did not enjoy their confidence. The retreat was at first miserably conducted, and at Okolona he lost five pieces of artillery, not less than two hundred men as prisoners, and came near being totally routed by an inferior force.

Not more brilliant nor cheering to the North was the expedition up Red River, in Louisiana, under General Banks.

The operations of General N. B. Forrest in West Tennessee and Kentucky, while regarded in the North as a display of savagery, were in the South regarded as a triumph and a source of satisfaction.

The Union leaders felt it necessary to inflict some chastisement to the Confederate forces to counteract the moral effect of our defeats in the West, and another expedition was started out June 2d, 1864, this time from Memphis, under the command of General S. D. Sturgis. His infantry and artillery, numbering about nine thousand, were composed in part of troops that had garrisoned Memphis and vicinity, and in part of a portion of the Sixteenth Corps, the remainder of which, under its commander, General A. J. Smith, had been up Red River in the expedition of General

Banks. The cavalry numbered about fifteen hundred, and were under the direct command of General B. H. Grierson. To this expedition, which was afterward known as "The Sturgis Raid," or "Guntown Diaster," the writer will devote more space, as upon his arrival at Castle Morgan he found a large per cent of its inmates who were compelled to attribute their captivity to the wretched management of that expedition.

This command moved leisurely along until June 9th, when, at Ripley, Miss., a small town about twenty miles northwest of Guntown, General Grierson, who was in advance, reported that a few prisoners had been taken, and that in his judgment the main body of the enemy would be found the next day at or near the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. General Grierson, I am informed, advised General Sturgis to keep his men well in hand, as the enemy was "near and in force."

The morning of the 10th dawned clear and bright. Sturgis moved out early, the road leading through a dense forest of timber, shutting out from the column any possibility of air. The men who marched that day will never forget how hot it was in that woods. The very sand under their feet was as if they were treading in hot ashes. The perspiration poured off like rain.

About twelve o'clock a courier from Grierson arrived at headquarters with despatches to the effect that he had encountered the enemy's pickets and scouts soon after leaving camp, but thus far had sustained no loss,

nor had he found any trouble in pushing his way forward. General Sturgis sent word back to Grierson (I write what was reported by one of Sturgis's aides) to push forward as rapidly as possible, saying that he would hurry up the infantry to his support.

The infantry had marched perhaps two miles when a staff-officer from the front arrived and said it was evident that Forrest had been found at last; that his force was not composed of roving bands, but of well-organized troops; that General Grierson did not deem it prudent to push forward any farther until he should learn more definitely what there was in his front. He believed, however, that Forrest's main force had been encountered, and certainly his (Grierson's) cavalry force, not exceeding fifteen hundred, could not cope with it, especially in that irregular country, with woods and swamps abounding on every side.

Since my residence in Colorado I made the acquaintance of a gentleman from Northern Mississippi who informed me that upon his parents' plantation General Sturgis passed the night previous to the battle, making his headquarters in his father's house. He assured me that Sturgis during his stay imbibed very freely of alcoholics and was stupidly drunk therefrom. This, in a measure, would account for his senseless order upon receiving the despatch from General Grierson. Upon receiving the report of Grierson's staff-officer, without heeding the suggestions it con-



tained, Sturgis renewed his orders to Grierson to push forward, but soon afterward was aroused by a messenger from General Grierson, who brought substantially the following :

“I have not the force at my command to advance farther. It is evident that I have met the bulk of Forrest’s forces, but I hold a good position, which I think I can hold until you come up with the infantry.”

The message did not imply that Sturgis should use more than ordinary expedition, but upon receiving it the drunken, frenzied commander ordered his infantry to go upon the “double-quick” to the front, a distance of not less than five miles! It should be remembered that the weather was intensely hot, sultry, oppressive ; that the road led through a heavy growth of timber ; that the men were marching with heavy loads—musket, cartridge-box, forty rounds of ammunition, canteen, haversack, and knapsack—but they were men who had been seasoned by many a hard campaign, and had never received an order but to obey it.

The infantry and artillery had gone but a part of the way when another courier from General Grierson reached Sturgis bearing the information that the Confederates were receiving re-enforcements from the South by rail. They came from Mobile, and had been sent to the aid of Forrest when it was known that Sturgis was seeking him. The whistling of the locomotives could be plainly heard by Grierson. With this infor-

mation, confirmed by prisoners captured, he suggested that Sturgis halt his command about three miles back, where it then was, form his infantry on a ridge, covered with high sedge grass, which would command nearly a mile of corduroy road, over which any troops would be compelled to pass should they follow him. Grierson would gradually fall back, and on nearing the point would stampede his cavalry, as if routed. He believed that Forrest would be drawn into such a trap. The entire infantry command would have been kept completely out of sight, while the artillery could be halted just over the brow of the hill until the proper moment. Had Forrest followed Grierson, as he probably would under the circumstances, his forces would have been swept from the face of the earth, for they could not have turned back, and to have gotten off the corduroy would have been to sink in the mire beyond hope of succor.

But General Sturgis was not in a frame of mind to listen to suggestions from a subordinate officer, much less a volunteer, and so "West Point" and whiskey asserted themselves. The men in the rear pressed forward with all possible haste by the order of their superior officer. For a mile or so they maintained a respectable organization. Then, panting for breath, dizzy with heat, wilted by the sultry air, they staggered along with broken ranks and in confusion. Some, determined to keep up with the mounted officers,

threw away their knapsacks and outer clothing. Many were sunstruck, and falling by the wayside, or led to a place of shade by their more hardy companions, were left half or wholly unconscious of the multitude fleeing past them. Hardly a tithe of the thousands that began the wild, senseless race, ordered by their commander an hour before, reached the goal for which they started.

An order, if possible more senseless than any other, compelled the large train of more than two hundred wagons to be taken over the long corduroy road and a narrow bridge, over which but one wagon at a time could pass, close up to the front; and there, in plain sight of the Confederates, and in easy range of their artillery, the train was parked! Should Sturgis be forced to retreat, it would be simply impossible to get his wagons back over this narrow bridge, and at no other place could they cross. It would have been impossible for them to cross the bottom over the deep morass. The only road was the corduroy leading to the bridge. No sane person could excuse any officer who would push his train forward so rapidly, and near where an uncertain battle was in progress, over a road which precluded even a possibility of saving it in case he was defeated.

The leading regiment, the One Hundred and Fourteenth Illinois, reached the front almost breathless after its five-mile race, and was thrown at once into action without a solitary support, except the handful of Grierson's cavalry, already on the ground. These

men had been hotly engaged for four hours, and their ammunition was about exhausted. The Ninety-third Indiana arrived on the scene some ten minutes later, having been delayed by the stragglers of the One Hundred and Fourteenth Illinois. Lest I should be misunderstood, let me say that these stragglers were falling behind, not on account of cowardice, but because overcome by heat and fatigue. Even in this breathless condition they were pressing on and doing the best they could to get to the front. A more gallant regiment was never enlisted. The Ninety-third Indiana reached the front with only a handful of men, breathless and exhausted. It was formed on the right of the One Hundred and Fourteenth Illinois, directly at the intersection of "Brice's Cross-Roads," the name given to this battle by the Confederates. Without a moment's halt to catch their wind, and with not a single regiment to support them, they moved forward in line of battle; but before their skirmishers could go fifty feet the rebels rose in the bushes in line of battle and poured into them a murderous volley, almost annihilating them, and before one half of them had fired a shot. They immediately opened fire, and were soon hotly engaged, but in a very few minutes their loss was so severe as to compel them to fall back for some support. A few rods to their rear they met the Seventy-second Ohio, which, like the two preceding regiments, was sent into battle against the entire Confederate



force, with no regular support. Soon it too was forced, by the overwhelming numbers of the enemy, to fall back to a line with the battery of its brigade—Waterhouse's battery—which had just arrived and gone into action.

Then followed the Ninety-fifth Ohio and Tenth Minnesota, of the same brigade. One at a time they were brought to the front and whipped in detail. Regiments numbering four and five hundred in the morning were reduced to mere battalions of one hundred and fifty. Fully half the command had for the time ceased to be available. They had been cruelly and uselessly sacrificed by the commanding general, and that too at a time when common-sense alone should have dictated the husbanding of his strength. His command was large enough to have gone anywhere in that section had it been properly led. Most of his troops were veterans, and in his wagons were ten days' rations, which would have enabled him to hold a picnic for that length of time in a section of country which was contributing of its substance in horses and men to the Confederacy. During the afternoon General Bouton's brigade of colored troops became hotly engaged and fought with coolness and desperation. General Bouton was twice captured during that day and as often retaken by his men. About four o'clock General Forrest had received sufficient re-enforcements to assume a vigorous offen-

sive. Then the horrors which followed really began, as our troops were forced back to escape being surrounded. The large wagon train had so blocked the roads that not more than six of the twenty pieces of artillery were ever gotten into position. The teamsters became panic-stricken, cut loose their horses, and started pell-mell for the rear, which, it must be admitted, they were fully justified in doing. The retreat began about five o'clock, and before an hour had passed it became a rout. Old veterans who had fought at Vicksburg, Shiloh, and Jackson now realized that their commanding officer was unworthy their confidence, and sought their own safety in flight. To obey the orders of the commanding general was but to insure their own destruction, and suicidal as they knew it to be, they were compelled each to depend upon himself.

The result was most disastrous. The whole national force was speedily routed. The demoralized troops fled back in wild confusion over the narrow and difficult road, without supplies and with no re-enforcements near. Some of the troops crowded back on the road over which they came through the whole of the night. The dead were left where they fell. The wounded, aided (if possible) by friends, staggered painfully along, enabled in rare cases, by the help of their more fortunate companions, to secure transportation in the few ambulances and wagons saved for the time from cap-

ture by the Confederates. The majority of the wounded, unable to obtain transportation, after marching a few miles or rods, weak and sick and faint, lay down beside the road, and in despair watched the army, wrecked by an incompetent leader, as it straggled past; and in a few minutes after the last men in blue passed by they were captives of the enemy.

But few of those placed in the wagons fared any better. A shell from the batteries of the enemy, by breaking a wheel or disabling a part of the team, compelled their abandonment, or a volley from the Confederates in dangerous proximity would impel the driver to cut loose his team, and mounting one, go racing to the front of the fugitive column. General Sturgis, completely unnerved by the wreck which his besotted brain had wrought, was willing, and proposed to surrender his whole command. "You can surrender all others, but my men shall be taken back to Memphis!" was his answer from Grierson.

While the Sturgis expedition was being prepared the regiment of which the author was a member returned from its "veteran furlough;" for it not enough horses could be at once obtained to mount the whole regiment, so only a portion participated in the expedition. With our regiment as a body and with our officers General Grierson was intimately acquainted, and on the retreat from Guntown he demanded of them such hard and dangerous service as his many months

as their brigade commander warranted him to expect would be faithfully performed. When the retreat was ended a roll of the regiment showed nearly one quarter of their number to have been killed and wounded.

The second cavalry brigade, under Colonel Winslow, a small brigade, reduced in numbers by the absence of many of their comrades at home on veteran furlough, was also placed behind the demoralized army as a rear-guard during most of the retreat. The pursuit, characterized by all the vigor for which General Forrest was famous, was close and galling until the fugitives crossed a stream at Ripley. Here they turned on their pursuers and gave battle. Their spirited and unlooked-for resistance lessened the aggressiveness of the Confederates and made their advance more cautious. For their own regimental and brigade officers the defeated Federals manifested their usual respect, but the appearance of General Sturgis all along the retreating column was greeted with groans and hisses and sheep-like bleatings, manifestations of their contempt and utter loss of respect for him.



## CHAPTER IV.

THE EXPERIENCE OF A WOUNDED MAN ON THE RETREAT FROM GUNTOWN—RECAPTURED—SENT TO MOBILE AND CAHABA.

BY Ira F. Collins, then a private in the One Hundred and Fourteenth Illinois, since then an honored and influential citizen of Kansas—a State Senator—who was severely wounded in the head and face, I have been given the experience of a wounded man on the retreat to Memphis. Without such a picture the story of the “Guntown Disaster” would be incomplete. Almost immediately after Collins’s regiment began falling back from the position held by it during the battle, he was wounded by a bullet, which, striking him just back of the right ear, passed through the ear close to the skull, into the cheek-bone, and out at the corner of the right eye. The effect of the blow was to knock him reeling to the earth. Rising, however, in a few moments, he resumed the retreat, but in a short time fell fainting to the ground. Two German boys—brothers—members of Collins’s company, ran to him, and each carrying one of his arms over their shoulders, assisted him back to the creek near by, into which all

plunged and waded through. The cool water lessened the flow of blood from the wound, and drinking to repletion, he was much revived. His two comrades hastened back with him as fast as possible, and sought some means of conveyance for him. Not an ambulance could be found, so his comrades loaded him into the back end of an ammunition wagon drawn by six mules and driven by a good-natured darkey. Then one returned to his place in the ranks, and the other remained to assist the wounded man. Before the wagon had gone half a mile the road became entirely blockaded by other wagons, ambulances, caissons, gun-carriages, and straggling mounted men. To make matters worse, rebel shells began dropping into the tangled mass, and in a few moments killed one of the mules drawing the ammunition wagon. Convinced that he could not proceed farther with his charge, the driver detached his saddle-mule from the wagon, and mounting it, at the request of Collins's friend took the wounded man on the back of the animal behind him, while the German walked beside him to keep Collins from falling off.

The Confederates were close upon them, and their bullets "pinged" about the trio as they started to overtake the ambulance train. Hastening forward, they soon overtook an ambulance not completely filled, and in this, faint and weak, the Illinois boy was placed. The further description of their miserable retreat is

best told by the wounded man himself in his own language :

“The ambulance into which I was admitted contained three other wounded men. One was shot in the leg, one in the arm, and the other through the body. This one and I occupied the rear end of the ambulance and the other two the front. The size of an ambulance box is about three by eight feet, and four wounded men to occupy this space without annoying each other required a great deal of patience and care. But I was soon oblivious to all around me. That awful faintness overpowered me, and I unconsciously went to sleep. The sun had not yet gone down when I was placed in the ambulance, and it was past midnight when I awoke. The moon was just coming up in the east, and the night was as clear and quiet as one ever saw. When I awoke I found that my companion beside me had fallen into the last long sleep of death, and his eyes were set and glaring, as if to watch his spirit in its flight to heaven. My friend that was shot in the arm had disappeared, and the one that was shot in the leg was begging for a drink of water, in which I soon joined him, and it was not long before our appeal was answered by a straggler passing by. My wounded comrade, in answer to my inquiry as to the situation, informed me that we were at the edge of a great swamp, that the road was blockaded with ambulances and wagons mired down, that our driver had cut his team



HON. IRA F. COLLINS.  
(FORMERLY 114TH ILLINOIS INFANTRY.)





loose, and mounting one of the horses and our comrade who was shot in the arm another, they had 'lit out,' leaving us to the mercy of a few stragglers. The situation was everything but pleasant to contemplate, and it looked as if we were booked for a tour through the Confederacy; but I determined to make a desperate effort to yet save myself. By an effort I raised myself to a sitting position to watch for an opportunity for assistance. The rising moon gave the straggling soldiers a better opportunity to get away, many of whom had laid by and caught a little rest in the dark part of the night. As soon as the moon came up they came out of their hiding-places and came hurrying by, singly and in squads, heedless of the groans of the wounded and dying. Some of them were mounted on mules, some were on horses, but the most of them were plodding along on foot. I soon heard the voice of a man I knew belonged to our regiment. He had come to the regiment with some other recruits from Springfield, Ill., and was assigned to Company B. He was a great, big, overgrown countryman, with a mouth on him capable of furnishing chin-music for two or three companies, but with a heart in him as big as a mountain. He was known in the regiment as 'Big Archie.' As he approached, I saw that he was mounted on a government mule. This chance was not to be lost, so I called to him by name. He turned, rode close up to the ambulance, and looked

me over critically, but did not recognize me. I do not think that my most intimate friends would have done so at that time. He said, 'Who be you?' I replied, 'One of the One Hundred and Fourteenth.' 'Wounded?'

'Yes.' 'Bad?' 'Yes; got a mighty sore head.' 'Who's with you?' 'No one but this corpse here beside me and the fellow over there in the front end, wounded in the leg.' 'Where is the surgeon that belongs to this ambulance?' 'He is gone, the hospital steward's gone, the driver's gone, and I want you to load me on that mule and take me along.' 'All right. I'll never leave any one of my regiment so long as I can be of any service to him; so just climb on behind me and let's be off, as the Johnnies are liable to come along at any time.' He rode up as close as he could and helped me on, and after bidding my late companion with the wounded leg good-by, we left him alone with his cold and silent companion. I felt cheered and buoyed up at the prospect of making my escape, but at the same time I felt sad at leaving my comrade with his shattered leg, lying there all alone, with no one to keep him company, soothe his pain, or give him so much as a drink of water. It is said that the fever that follows a gun-shot wound fills the mind with the wildest fancies. What frightful pictures, then, must have passed before his mind that night as he lay there with no companion save the pale moon, the silent stars, and the lifeless form of his dead comrade!

"After I was mounted on the mule behind 'Big Archie' I put my arms around him and locked my hands in front of him and for a time held on quite well. But it was not very long before I began to grow weak and tired and sick, and a terrible faintness came over me, and I longed to lie down anywhere, so that I might get a little rest. I asked 'Archie' if there was any prospect of our army making a stand or going into camp. He said, 'Yes; they gave us h—l yesterday; it will be our turn to-day, and we will pay them back with a big per cent on their investment.' But all his encouraging talk failed to furnish stimulant enough to keep up my drooping spirits, and I was prevented from falling off only by his strong hold on my wrists in front of him. I begged him to put me off in a fence corner, or anywhere else. He finally promised that he would leave me at the first house we came to, and I did not have long to wait, though it seemed an age to me. He rode up to a double log-cabin—two rooms standing apart, with a porch between. The floor of the porch was about two or three feet from the ground, and on that my good friend tried to land me, but failed, and I fell to the ground. He threw me his blanket, and I had just got settled down to rest when an old woman came out and asked who was there. I answered: 'A wounded Yank.' She asked if there was anything she could do for me. I said I would like to be taken into the house, as I was



chilled with the night air and the dew and awfully sick besides. In fact, I thought my time had come. The old lady and her daughter-in-law came out and assisted me into the house and into bed. The old lady saw that I needed a stimulant, and that at once, so she set about immediately making me a cup of coffee.

“There was a large, old-fashioned fireplace in one end of the room, with a bed of live coals in it, and beside the fire sat a tea-kettle full of hot water; so the time was short until the coffee was made, of which I could drink only two or three swallows; but this small amount seemed to revolutionize my whole system, to put new life into my body, and I soon dropped asleep. I had slept about an hour when I was awakened by a loud knocking at the door, with the demand to be admitted. The old lady took down the barricade from the door, when in stepped a lieutenant of the Confederate army, and inquired how long it had been since the last ‘Yanks’ had passed. The old lady said she thought they were still passing. He then informed her that he was one of General Forrest’s staff and that the general was at the door. This was anything but pleasant news to me, as till then I had hopes of making my escape; but I now realized that I was a prisoner of war, badly wounded, and in the hands of the Confederates.

“Soon after the young staff-officer left, the old lady

stepped to the door and blew a conch-shell, which brought her husband from his hiding-place in the brush. He was an old man, about seventy years of age, and in mortal dread of being picked up by the 'Yanks' and shipped off to a Northern prison. Along about seven or eight o'clock in the morning a couple of Texan Rangers strode in and called for breakfast. The old lady and her daughter-in-law went into the other part of the house to prepare their breakfast. The old man was also out of the room. As soon as the room was left to the Texans and myself, they proceeded to take an inventory of the wounded 'Yank' and his effects. The first thing to attract their attention was my gum blanket, which had been spread to keep my bloody clothing from soiling the bedding. They rolled me over and pulled the blanket out, with the cheering remark that I would not need it any more. They then pulled a plain gold ring off my finger, went through my pants pockets, and took an old wallet with about two dollars and fifty cents in it. This was my first initiation into the Confederacy. My two Confederate friends concluded not to wait for the breakfast they had ordered, but took a hasty departure. When the old lady came in to call them to breakfast she found they had gone and that I had been robbed by two of the chivalrous defenders of the South. It was an eye-opener for her, as she had always imagined that Southern soldiers were the embodiment of perfection

and honor. Such an act on the part of the Northern soldiers would not have surprised her in the least, as she believed that the Northern army was largely composed of the worst class of humanity, who were actuated in their invasion of the South by the prospect of pillage and plunder, and she could only excuse this robbery on the ground that they were not Mississippians but Texans, who were more devoid of honor than the rest of the Confederate soldiers.

“After this two other rebel soldiers came along with a prisoner. He was a German, and could not speak English. They stopped and got a drink of water. The prisoner made signs that he wanted something to eat, but his captors would not listen to him, seeming to be in a great hurry. They prodded him along with their bayonets, because he did not move quick enough. They went out swearing that they would just as leave kill the d—d Dutchman as not, who had been hired to come out here and fight against ‘weuns.’ The house stood back three or four rods from the road, and it was only a few moments until I heard the report of a gun. The old man looked out, and said they had killed the Dutchman. They had probably ordered him to do something which he did not understand, and his not obeying the order gave them an excuse to kill him in cold blood, to gratify a malice that existed throughout the South because the Germans were loyal to the land and government of

their adoption. Wherever I went I found that the rebels were exceedingly bitter against them, and I have no doubt but the feeling was general. The guards in charge of this poor, unfortunate German did not stop to make arrangements for the funeral, but hurried on, leaving him lying in the road. The old man of the house where I was stopping got another old man, one of his neighbors, that afternoon, and buried the German in a fence corner near where he was murdered; for murder it was, and in the 'first degree' at that.

"After the excitement of the morning had worn off somewhat, the old lady set about to cleanse and dress my wound as best she could with the scanty means at her command. She had neither soap, lint, nor bandages—all very necessary articles to properly handle my case with. Yet when she was through I felt very much refreshed. While at work she was very inquisitive, and wanted to know why I had come down there to fight 'weuns' when they had not tried to molest the people of the North. She said that all they wanted was to be left alone; that they were not trying to deprive the North of any of its rights or property, and that she could not understand why we wanted to take their property from them. She insisted that the North was responsible for every drop of blood that was being spilled; that we never could whip them, for they were fighting to defend their



homes and property, and in such a cause were bound to succeed, and the sooner 'old Lincoln' understood this the sooner the war would end in the independence of the South.

"I was not in a very good condition to argue with her, and only remarked that there could be one result of the war, and that would be the maintenance of the Union. After she was through discussing the war, she said I would soon be paroled and sent home, while all that was able-bodied would be held in Southern prisons, and as soon as I got home she wished I would interest myself in getting her son paroled, who was then a prisoner at Camp Douglas, Chicago, Ill. I informed her that I was an Illinois soldier, and did not live far from Chicago; that if only a private, I had great influence with Governor Yates, who lived only a few miles from my home, and I would surely send her son home to her as soon as I got home myself. It turned out that the old lady had three sons in the Confederate service, and that the prisoner was her youngest, and was the husband of the young lady. From this time on I was the object of special interest to the women of the house, and received every attention they could bestow. Chickens were scarce in that neighborhood since the two armies had passed through; nevertheless, the old family rooster was killed to make broth for the wounded 'Yank,' in order that he might the sooner recover and be permitted to re-

turn to the North, where he could carry out his mission of love and charity.

“The place where I was stopping was fourteen miles from Guntown and five miles from the swamp where we had mired down and been abandoned. I remained here until the second day after the battle, when a rebel surgeon came in and examined my wound. By this time it was greatly swollen, and one could easily lay his hand in the opening. The surgeon proceeded to sew it up, which operation was a good deal like trying to draw the mouth of a well-filled sack together, and caused me the greatest pain and agony. But the irritation caused by drawing the two raw edges of the wound together soon increased the swelling, tearing out the stitches and affording me great relief. In the afternoon a train of three or four ox-teams stopped in front of the house, and I was loaded into one of the wagons, all of which were loaded with wounded prisoners that had been picked up along the road. The teams were all driven by old and superannuated men like the one where I was stopping, and who had been pressed into the service to assist in gathering up the wounded ‘Yanks.’ There were a few rebel soldiers as guards to the teams, and we moved along at a very slow pace. At almost every house we came to a halt was made and more wounded added to our number. The heat was intense. The sun poured down its burning rays upon our un-

protected bodies like a ball of liquid fire, while the green flies swarmed around our festering wounds like bees around a hive. I had mine tied up as best I could, to protect it from their fatal blow, but not secure enough. We went into camp that night close to a great swamp without anything to eat and nothing for beds except the hard, bare ground. The recollections of that summer night will remain fresh in memory as long as life shall last. My companions were wounded in every conceivable shape. They had gone from two to three days without attention, and the long, jostling ride in the ox-wagons, exposed to the heat of the sun, aggravated by the deadly work of the green flies, caused them the utmost distress, and their delirious ravings were most heart-rending and pitiful. With regard to my own wound, the track of the ball was directly across the cavity of the ear, into which the blood had run, and which had become hard and dry, creating an inflammation and causing an earache a hundred times more painful than the wound itself. To add still further to my distress, the green flies had left their tormentors, and they had worked their way into my ear, and there was no way of getting them out ; so I was forced not only to endure the pain, but was tortured by the thought that I would be eaten up alive by maggots. At last the night wore away, and we made an early start on our journey back across the battle-field, past long rows of new-made graves.

All around we could see evidences of the terrible work of the battle. Stumps of great trees, some twenty feet high, with their tops cut off and their bodies torn and splintered, were standing as the only monuments over these graves. Great flocks of buzzards were sailing around over the battle-field, while hundreds of others on trees and stumps were contentedly resting from their gorgeous feast of putrid flesh and watching with seeming satisfaction the ripening of their loathsome harvest.

“We arrived at Guntown about four P.M. Here the rebel surgeons had established their hospitals, and as the wounded ‘Yanks’ were brought in they were trimmed up in the most approved style. An old carpenter’s bench stood under a tree, and was used as a dissecting-table, and as we drove up we saw at one end of this bench two or three dozen arms and legs, and several more were added from our party; and from the way they were cutting and sawing, I didn’t know but they might conclude to amputate my head. We were unloaded and placed in a tent on some straw. I soon got the attention of a hospital steward, and told him the condition of my wound. He got some turpentine and injected it into my ear and over my wound, which had the desired effect of cleaning out the maggots. After getting my wound attended to we were served with supper by a delegation of ladies who had been feeding the Confederate wounded, and



had enough left for our squad. The supper consisted of stewed chicken and warm biscuit, and was the best meal I ate while I was in the Confederacy. It had been a long time between meals with us, as we had not eaten anything since noon the day before, and this supper of wholesome food, so well cooked and delicately served, was relished, at least by me, as none had been before, or was afterward, while I was in the service.

“ We stayed in Guntown till evening of the next day, when we were loaded into box cars bedded with straw and started on our way to Mobile, Ala. The train consisted of ten cars, six of which were loaded with wounded, three with Government wagons captured at the battle of Guntown, and one with the guards. Those loaded with wagons were flat cars, and were next the engine. The cars were all old and greatly out of repair. They had apparently been in use since the beginning of the war, without ever being near a repair-shop for repairs. And if the cars were in bad order and in need of repair, the road-bed was worse. Bridges were rotten, the iron was badly worn and bent from long use, the ties rotten and gone in many places, so that the rails were without support, fills were washed out, and cuts had been filled up by heavy rains. Section-men were a thing of the past, the Confederate army having absorbed all the able-bodied men.

“ We started from Guntown just before sundown, and

went bumping along over the road at the rate of six or eight miles an hour. About midnight we were startled by the car I was in leaving the rails and jumping along on the ties. In a moment the car turned over and down an embankment some six or eight feet high, throwing us with considerable force from the floor to the roof, on which it rested. For a moment after the car had struck the ground all was still—still as death; then a groan, a wail, and cries for help rang out through the darkness of the night, which told of the agony of those who, with a freshly-amputated arm or leg, or with limbs or bodies crushed with ball or bruised with shell, had been hurled from the floor to the roof, only to strike upon bleeding stumps or bandaged wounds. Some cried for help, some for a light to bandage up their gaping wounds, some cursed the luck that seemed to fate them for all the miseries that could be meted out to man; others prayed and begged for some one to put them out of their misery; others still could only moan out broken sentences in their unconsciousness. Help was slow in coming, as the guards had their own killed and crippled to attend to first. Many of the guards were riding on the top of the cars to see that no one escaped, and when the cars turned over they were badly bruised and smashed, but only one was killed outright. At last the door was forced open, and the guards got to work carrying out the wounded. They laid us on a bank beside the track. We had

with us a rebel surgeon, one or two assistant surgeons, and a few able-bodied men to wait on the wounded. These and the guards did all they could for the wounded, but when the car was opened some were already past all help, while others soon bled to death from having their wounds torn open. Had the car been filled with able-bodied men the damage and injury had been slight, but as it was not one escaped unhurt. In the course of time the wreck was cleared away, we were again loaded in other cars and started on our funeral-like journey. At Guntown I found the first lieutenant of my company, who had been wounded in the fleshy part of the thigh near the groin—a very dangerous and painful wound. He had a faithful nurse with him in the person of Sergeant Henry Freeman of the same company. Freeman divided his attention among all in our car in the way of getting water, loosening bandages, and bathing feverish and painful wounds. The place of the wreck was in a big forest, and after all had been gotten out and attended to, it occurred to the sergeant to make his escape, and he so informed the lieutenant and myself. He said he would like to go, but would not leave us if we said stay. We told him that if he had a chance to save himself to do so, as I would soon be able to wait upon the lieutenant. So we whispered to him a few words or messages to be sent to dear ones waiting for news from us at home. A pressure of the hand, a word of encouragement, a few

moments' waiting, and the opportunity had come. Like a frightened deer, he bounded into the dark shades of the forest and disappeared. How the lieutenant and I wished we were on our feet and with him! We supposed that within a week he would be within our lines, striking the Mississippi River at some point between Vicksburg and Natchez; but, poor fellow, he had a hard road before him, wading through cypress swamps and canebrakes, living on roots and berries, and hiding in swamps by day and travelling by night, with no definite idea as to whether he was keeping the right course or not. At any rate, for thirty days he wandered through swamps and woods all alone, with no companions but the owls and whippoorwills, until he became a walking skeleton, bereft of reason. On July 9th the army was marching not far from Guntown battle-field, being in the neighborhood of Tupelo, when the advance guard found a man standing by a tree in a most wretched condition. His clothes were nearly all torn from his body, his hands and face were covered with cuts and sores, and it was only by the greatest effort that he could walk at all. And strange to say, he had lost his speech, so that he could not talk so as to be understood. By some means his identity was discovered, and as all that was left of the One Hundred and Fourteenth was with A. J. Smith at that time, he was sent to our company. The captain of the company did not recognize his



own sergeant, nor did the sergeant recognize his captain. It took the best of nursing to bring him back to health. Indeed, he never did fully recover. At thirty he was an old and broken-down man, and a few years ago he sunk into an untimely grave.

“Our further journey to Mobile after the wreck was without particular incident. We arrived at our destination about noon on Sunday, and were at once transferred from the cars to the old Garner House, which had been improvised as a hospital for our reception. This house is situated on the principal street of the city, fronting the bay and the Mobile and Ohio depot. The location was a good one for observation. The lieutenant and myself with half a dozen others were assigned to a corner room on the second floor facing the north and east, giving us a good view of the main street, the bay, and the depot. We were soon washed and rigged out in calico shirts, so as to be presentable to the public, who were clamoring for admission to see the first crop of ‘Yanks’ that had been gathered into their granary. They were admitted in squads, composed of men, women, and children, who marched through the different wards in charge of the ward master or his assistants, and inspected each wounded prisoner with about the same curiosity that a crowd has for the animals in a circus tent; and the ward master acted as guide and explained each case as they came to it. I recollect hearing him invite some lady friends

to come into our ward and see a 'Yank' with his head shot off. The exhibition only lasted two or three hours, when the public were turned out, and visitors were never admitted after that.

"For a number of years before the war Mobile had been the seat of quite a flourishing medical college, and there were quite a number of students yet in attendance. The arrival of our party was a feast for them, and they at once began a series of experiments upon the worst cases among us. I recollect one poor fellow in our ward. His name was Starr; he was a sergeant in an Ohio regiment—the Ninety-third, I think. He was shot in the shoulder and was badly mangled, yet he was able to be up and walk around most of the time, and as he was a bright and intelligent young fellow he soon became a favorite in our ward. After two or three weeks the rebel surgeons decided that it would be necessary to operate upon his shoulder-blade. So they took him down into the office and proceeded to unjoint his arm at the shoulder and take out the entire shoulder-blade. That was the last of poor Starr, who had been the life of our ward. They brought him back and laid him on his cot in his old place, but the shock had been too much for him. He lingered along a few days, half unconscious of what was going on around him, and died."

Collins remained at Mobile until August, when, being well enough to be discharged from the hospital,

and that city being strongly threatened by the fleet of Farragut, he was sent to Castle Morgan, where in a later chapter we shall find him engaged in the struggles for liberty, secret or open, that made restless the lives of many who, like him, were unwilling inmates.

Returning briefly to the army of General Sturgis, which a few pages back we left fleeing toward Memphis, we would state that of the thousands which had marched out ten days before, composed of the very best troops in the West, troops that had fought on a score of victorious fields, less than two thirds returned, and even these were stripped of almost everything save their small arms, and many had thrown these away as impediments to their flight and a useless encumbrance under such a leader as Sturgis.

## CHAPTER V.

THE DEFEAT OF STURGIS A BITTER SURPRISE TO EVERY ONE—A. J. SMITH SENT AGAINST FORREST—THE ENEMY MET AT PONTOTOC—CHARGE OF A PORTION OF THE NINTH ILLINOIS CAVALRY AGAINST THREE CONFEDERATE BRIGADES—CAPTURE OF AUTHOR.

THIS defeat was a surprise to the whole country, but it was not so astounding to the troops in West Tennessee as the fact that Sturgis was permitted to remain a general officer in the army. Some of the fugitives from the Sturgis disaster arrived in Memphis during the night of June 12th, having travelled day and night, and nearly all were there by the 14th. Immediately most active preparations were made for fitting out another expedition for the purpose of wiping out the disgrace and accomplishing the object sought—*i. e.*, to defeat General Forrest's forces. This expedition was placed under the command of General A. J. Smith, who had won a most enviable reputation as a bold, judicious, and most vigorous fighter. The disastrous failure of General Sturgis, following so closely upon the heels of the other unsatisfactory expeditions in the West, had



produced alarm and bitter indignation. Smith, called by our men "Old ragged A. J.," though personally unknown to the men of Grierson, by reputation stood high in their estimation. In him every man had implicit confidence. A body of cavalry was sent to La Grange, Tenn., fifty miles west of Memphis, in less than a week after the return of Sturgis. All preparations were complete by July 5th, and on that day the whole command of Smith was on the march toward Tupelo, near where it was known that the Confederates were in force. Light skirmishing continued each day of the march until the 11th, when the Union army arrived at Pontotoc, and the advance rested there through the day, while the main body of Smith's troops were preparing for the encounter that was known to be near at hand. In the afternoon a squadron of our regiment was placed on picket a mile or two southeast of Pontotoc, and remained there during the night. The Confederate forces were estimated to number about fourteen thousand, and the forces of Smith were about the same.

During the night two or three mounted Confederates, while feeling their way about the lines in our immediate vicinity, came close up to one of our videttes, and were halted. The vidette at that particular post was a new recruit, a young boy just down from the North, who had never been in the presence of an enemy more formidable than some young schoolfellow

who may have crossed his path by having an affection for his chosen inamorata. He had been instructed to halt any one coming toward him from any direction. Perhaps his instructions had gone no farther. Certain it is that his order to halt was followed by a shot from the Confederate, and another shot immediately after. Such an astounding reply to a civil request struck him dumb with astonishment, and then, as he considered it, his sensitive soul, bruised and down-trodden, sought relief in tears, and seeing that the Confederate was rapidly approaching him, he ran to his nearest comrade, a few rods away, exclaiming, "Boo-hoo! boo-hoo! boo-hoo! That—that damn fool has tried to shoot me just because I spoke to him!" His comrade, Dwight Talcott, to whom he had run, knew more of the eccentric ways of the Confederates, and extended the "compliments of the season," with "best wishes," from a repeating rifle. The interchange of courtesies seemed mutually satisfactory, and further civilities were postponed to a more convenient season. That boy was heartily laughed at for a few days, I was told, but in later engagements learned to extend and return compliments with the utmost self-control, and after winning the esteem of his comrades in several battles, lost his life near Nashville.

During the afternoon of the 11th a few of the horsemen of the enemy appeared on our front, and venturing too near, to make better observations, a

white horse ridden by one of them was killed by a bullet from our men. Seven years after, in New York City, I met a young medical student who, in conversation, described to me how he had had a white horse shot by our forces at that point. A slight comparison of notes established his identity, and in serio-comic words he demanded and received at my expense an extra glass of soda-water as compensation in full for the loss he had sustained that July day. He was L. L. Crump, of West Point, Miss., a most companionable gentleman.

Hardly had we cooked our coffee on the morning of the 12th when another portion of our regiment was sent out to our picket post, and the combined force, numbering about eighty men, was commanded to push back the pickets of the enemy until it was certain how much of a force was stationed on that road.

Our commander that morning was Captain Buel—sturdy, self-sacrificing, given by his men an esteem that a father might envy; and the esteem was returned. It was possibly prejudicial to military discipline, but for three years he had messed with the boys, the sons of his old neighbors. For three years he had refused a promotion that would separate him from his Company "G." We laughed at some of his old-fashioned notions, but loved him all the more.

Our company's commander was Captain Harper, later colonel of the regiment. While our relations were not of the most cordial character, I admired his un-

questioned bravery and dash. In camp we recognized him as almost a martinet, but in the shock of battle, in the hour of danger, where a cool head, a quick perception, a prompt, vigorous action may be necessary, no regiment of men could give to a command the feeling of strength, self-reliance, and security that the presence of Captain Harper did. His nobler qualities so completely hid his minor faults that memory has given him a warm corner in my heart. The command is all ready, and moves out toward the picket post of the enemy, plainly in view. Before us for a half mile is an open pasture, embracing perhaps a quarter section of land. Through its centre runs an unfenced road upon which we are to move. On either side of the road, scattered here and there, are stumps of trees and little shrubs. Half way between our command and the pickets of the enemy runs a little brook. From our starting-point to the brook is a gentle decline. From the brook toward the farther side of the field, where a dozen or two of the Confederates are seen, the ground rises abruptly. Down to the brook we ride without opposition, but beyond that point our progress is disputed. The sharp reports of rifles ring out upon the air, and a few bullets spat the ground beside us. Then we dismount, and advance in line on foot. Our opponents present an irregular line, remain stationary for a few minutes, fire, and slowly retreat. Our force return their fire, run up the hill toward



them, and when their bullets whistle thick, we seek protection behind the stumps and shrubs for a few minutes. The distance between our line and theirs grows less, until they enter a more shrubby place. Where they are the shrubs cover half the ground, and behind them but a short distance is a dense undergrowth so completely covered with leaves that it is impossible to see a distance of your own length through its foliage.

The Confederates retreat into the dense thicket, and we lessen the distance between them and us. Though we are unable to see them now, we are conscious that their numbers have been increased. Down in the pasture their number was perhaps a score. We feel that they may now number one hundred, perhaps a double of that. Our own force does not exceed eighty men, but for two years we have been armed with the repeating rifle, and know its full value at close quarters. In previous engagements we have seen a company of our men armed with their swift repeating guns more than a match for a regiment of the enemy armed with muzzle-loading pieces only. Our success in the past has given to our men an overweening confidence; a confidence that has won in the past, and in the future shall win for them, an enviable name; a confidence that in this case came near being their annihilation. Our leaders, too, are not men who are given to accepting "hearsay evidence" where they have been commanded

to bring back positive information as to the position and strength of the enemy.

For more than a year we have been commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Berg, an alert, brave, judicious man, whose influence and training have made his regiment one of the most aggressive in the department. It is to officers that regiments owe much of their reputation. A regiment of heroes can win but a meagre reputation for bravery under the command of cowardly or inefficient officers.

Only a few rods now separate our lines from that of the enemy, but an impenetrable veil of green leaves hides from our view not only their number, but everything distant more than an arm's length. We are conscious, however, that they have been re-enforced, and halting for a moment, we make ready for the hot work that almost certainly is close at hand. Let us look beyond the few rods that lie between these two eager combatants. We shall observe an open field free from all stumps and trees rising gently for a half mile in our front, extending on either side a good rifle shot in distance. Close to the nearest edge of the field, in our immediate front, is a rail fence. It is but a few feet from—almost against—the thicket in which our men are now halted. Rails have been hastily brought from other parts of the field and piled against this fence, changing it into a breastwork. Behind this breastwork, immediately in front of our battalion, is placed

Lyon's Kentucky brigade of Confederates. On their right extends Rucker's brigade, and back in the field, in good supporting distance, is placed McCullough's old brigade. Three veteran brigades, and against them less than one hundred men are about to rush! What must be the result? Can anything save them from total destruction? If the leaves were away, two score of Confederates could aim at each of our men. The men of our command have halted long enough to replace in their rifles all the cartridges that have been discharged. "Ready, men!" rings out the clear voice of Captain Harper. "Forward! Double quick!" and with a step as swift as the tangled bushes will permit, his men comply with the order. Hardly had I gone forward a dozen steps when an unseen trailing vine caught my toe and cast me headlong to the ground.

So near were we to the enemy that every order was as clear to them as to us. They heard the order, "Forward! Double quick!" and waiting but a few moments, believing we must have been strongly re-enforced or we would not have the fortitude to charge them when so stoutly posted behind a breastwork, and hearing the crackling of twigs in their immediate front, they were ordered to fire. The order was given just as I fell forward, and a thousand bullets flew hissing into the thicket. What an awful crash! What a cutting of twigs and scarring of saplings just above me! The smoke and powder seemed blown into our very

faces. The thought came, perhaps the fall was fortunate and had shielded me from something more serious! And another thought—that I must have been excited. How could such a furious volley of musketry have come from a hundred guns! The jar of the body must have strangely magnified the roar. Thoughts come quickly in moments of excitement; but there was little time or inclination to reason upon the subject. In a moment I was up from the ground and running forward with all haste. One might pass within a yard of a comrade and be prevented by the leafy veil from seeing or being seen by him. The idea that there were only our own number opposed to us was still uppermost in the mind. Two or three rods brought me to the edge of the underbrush, and two or three steps taken out into the open space placed me almost against the breastwork. Off on my left in the thicket plainly are heard the yells of a comrade who has been crazed by a bullet that has burned his skull. Tom Raisor has a savage wound through his right arm, which a few weeks later gave him an empty sleeve. Twice before, in different engagements, has the brave fellow been wounded in that same right arm. Ed Branch, the new recruit, fresh and ruddy and strong, just from his Northern home, has been instantly killed by a bullet in his brain. Sergeant Abbott, who two years before used to carry me, crippled by a painful wound in the leg, could not carry a child now. His right arm is



useless from a ragged bullet wound. Shortly after he was sent North to recuperate, and returned to his regiment only to be shot through the lung at Nashville. This wound, however, was not fatal. After a long struggle with disease his strong constitution conquered, and a few years later he was administering the office of lieutenant-governor for the young State of Nebraska. Ben Smith, of Company G, was dead. Henry Rinker and Charley Cheats are helpless from severe wounds in the leg. How many more have been disabled I know not. That furious hail of lead was spiteful enough to annihilate us in a few moments. None of our battalion have emerged from the dense thicket. Have they all been killed or disabled by that murderous fire? I am alone, with a hundred guns aimed directly at me! The front rank of the Confederates has fired its volley, and while hastily reloading there is a lull. For a moment I stop in confusion. A score of Confederates yell, "Don't shoot that man; surrender, d—n you, surrender!" And halting sideways to the breastwork, a tall, brawny Kentuckian reached out a long arm, and seizing the boyish Northern soldier by the collar of his shirt, or by the shoulder, jerked him from the Union into the Confederacy.

## CHAPTER VI.

CONFEDERATES DECEIVED AS TO THE NUMBER OF  
THEIR ASSAILANTS—TAKEN TO THE CONFEDERATE  
COMMANDER—THE PROVOST GUARD.

RUNNING so actively that hot day, for a few moments I was breathless and a passive subject in their hands while they stripped from me my arms, a dozen men swearing at me most roundly during the act. The instantaneous change from a pursuing, exultant freeman to a roughly handled, roundly cursed, humble prisoner, presented a ludicrous side to my mind, and as soon as I could get breath suggested to my captors that the change was a rough joke to their unwilling guest. But they were in no joking mood. Indeed, they were never more serious in their lives. Seeing with what confidence we had approached them, they supposed that a large body of men must be immediately behind us, and so suggested to me. Casting my eyes to right and left, and aware then of the danger that menaced the remainder of our small force should the enemy know that our numbers were but few and that no support was nearer than

two or three miles, I sought to deceive them. "All is fair in love and war," and a truthful statement, if believed by them, could only bring disaster to my friends. I candidly informed a lieutenant-colonel, who was questioning me as to our strength, "Ours is only the advance guard; Smith's whole army is in our rear and close at hand. You will be charged soon—probably very soon—and by a force sufficient to carry your breastwork." He stopped in his questionings and shouted to his men, "Load up, every one of you; the 'Yanks' will be on us in a few minutes! Ready, every man!" Seeing that he was far more inclined to remain on the defensive than to attempt the capture of the squad in the thicket was most satisfactory to me, and to confirm him in my truthfulness I begged to be sent to the rear as soon as possible that I might not be wounded in the second charge alleged to be close at hand.

Could he have known the real state of affairs, with a small part of his force he could easily have surrounded and captured the remnant of our small command. I gave myself the credit that by a *ruse de guerre*, by coolness and apparent earnestness, they were saved from capture, and some perhaps from wounds or death. In accordance with custom I was sent to the rear, perhaps more quickly on account of my demand. A boyish Confederate of about my own age was called to guard me. He was commanded to

take me first to the headquarters of General Buford, and when the general should have learned from me what could be of any value to him, to deliver me to the provost guard. The three brigades mentioned constituted the division of Buford. The boy and I immediately started for the rear, at first with haste, but later with a slower walk, and had gone perhaps a quarter of a mile, and were away from all troops, when a freckled, red-headed, mean-looking fellow saw us from a distance, and coming toward us bawled out, "Hello! Yank; where did they pick you up?" The reply to his question was not satisfactory, and at once he began a tirade of personal abuse. From the scowling looks of my young Kentucky guard I felt he had no sympathy with the cowardly language uttered by the speckled newcomer, and gathering assurance from his looks, I replied to the abusive words of the other with such language as I would not dared to have uttered had not I felt the guard a friend, and ready to protect me in my rights as a prisoner of war. The poltroon was unarmed, except with a small pistol, and was doubtless a hanger-on of the hospital department—a slop-emptier or some such character—and seemed to think that here was an opportunity to injure an enemy with perfect safety to himself that he must not let pass. After pouring upon me a shower of mean epithets, he noticed that I had on a pair of spurs, and ordered me with an oath to "get down thar and take them ar spurs off, you dirty s——!"



We had stood there at first because the stranger had stopped us to ask questions, and had remained there because the vials of his wrath were not yet empty. But I had noticed the face of the young Kentuckian growing blacker each moment, and when the demand was made of me to deliver up my spurs, he was no longer able to restrain his anger. I do not care to here repeat the contemptuous epithets he applied to the slop-emptier. Only such an occasion could excuse them. His rage increased with each moment. At length he cocked his rifle, and raising it half way to his shoulder, exclaimed: "You d—d sneak, you speak another word to this fellow and I'll blow you to h—— in a minute! He's a Yank, but he's got more man in his finger than is in your whole ornery body! Go 'long, now!" And the "ornery" fellow slunk away muttering something to himself apparently, certainly not distinctly understood by either of us. The young guard told me his own name was Beach; that his home was in Henderson County, Ky., and that his mother still resided there. His manner and face were very prepossessing from the first, and after he proved himself so noble he seemed like a tried and true friend rather than my guard. The episode with the knight of the slop-bucket detained us only a few minutes, and passing farther to the rear, we soon came to a clear, bubbling spring of cold water, and as I was very thirsty, I asked the privilege of stopping for a drink. Not only was the

privilege granted, but Beach himself knelt down on the opposite side of the stream, and we drank together like two comrades. Then he suggested that we sit there and rest for a while. This to me was most agreeable, and for a half hour we remained there, sitting in the shade of a tree near by, looking at the movements of some Confederate troops a quarter of a mile away, and compared notes as to our experiences during the past two years, and found that we had been together in several minor engagements. He mentioned that his mother still lived in Henderson County, Ky., and as that county is on the Ohio River, her residence was within the Union lines. In my pocketbook I had a dozen or two of United States postage stamps. These I took out and gave to him. United States stamps, I afterward learned, were quite valuable to Confederates having friends within Union lines, and were by them highly prized. He thanked me with much heartiness, and his manner was even more cordial than his words. He offered to pay me for the stamps, but he had been so generous toward me, and the intrinsic value of the stamps was so little, that his proposition could not be considered. I learned in a few weeks the value of even so little a thing as a three-cent stamp. They were worth, when we arrived at Cahaba, from twenty-five to fifty cents each in Confederate scrip. One of the spurs I had on at that time had had quite an interesting history. I had taken it

from the boot of a dead Confederate at Moscow, Tenn., the winter previous, after the Confederate General S. D. Lee had attacked and had been repulsed at that place. This spur I gave to him, and one or two other things of little value. Two days after, at the battle of Tupelo, young Beach, while in a charge upon General Smith's command, was captured, and at the time was wearing my spur. The strap of the spur had on it a mark made by me, and while Sergeant Abbott was observing some passing prisoners, a few hours later, his quick eye detected the mark upon the strap, and he requested Beach to give the spur to him. When Abbott went North to recover from his wound, a short time after, he carried the spur to my home, and there I found it a year after. What the subsequent history of Beach was I never learned. At length we arose to continue our march to the rear, but stood for a moment looking toward the moving troops. Hearing my companion utter something, I turned toward him, and was astonished—yes, thunderstruck—to hear him demand if I had any money. He had up to that moment been the soul of honor and magnanimity. The protection he had extended me only a short time before had been so manly, so noble, I would gladly have given to him in thankful repayment my last penny or any honorable service, and the shock of disappointment was as painful as the sudden rupture of years of friendship; but without replying to his question, I drew my wallet from

its pocket and, turning away my face, handed it to him. He did not step forward to take it, and feeling that his conduct was strange, I looked toward him. His face was troubled and flushed with mortification. Still extending the wallet, I stepped toward him, when, with an exclamation of manly resentment, he motioned me to retain it. He was visibly chagrined, and in a moment said: "I am sorry to be mistaken for a robber, and more sorry that the treatment of prisoners by our men warrants any Northern soldier in regarding so many of us as robbers. Nothing could induce me to take from a prisoner anything he desired to keep for himself; but when you are turned over to the keeping of others of our men, I am ashamed to say you will be robbed. I wish it were otherwise, but it will not be so. I have never been a prisoner, but men of my acquaintance who have been tell me that only in the rarest instances are your men robbed, and then always by some contemptible whelp like that red-headed puppy whom we met a little while ago, and who are despised as much by the majority of your men as I detested that fellow. And I have known of many men who spoke of being treated very respectfully by your soldiers, and even being given money and tobacco when they had little or none themselves. The only reason I spoke to you about your money was to suggest that you should hide it, for our men will certainly take from you everything you have of value." I had in "greenbacks"



fifteen dollars, besides a dollar or two in "fractional currency." The fifteen dollars I rolled into a compact pencil shape, and cutting a hole on the inside of the fly of my pants, I crowded the money into that place. A gold pen and silver holder was put into the same place. The "fractional currency," by the advice of my friend, was left in the wallet, for he said, "If the provost guard find no money in your wallet they will mistrust that you have hidden what you have, and their search will be all the closer." I had two pocket knives—one of average size, the other a small penknife that I had found in Memphis a few months before. The penknife I put in the waistband of my pants; the other, as more bulky and less easily concealed, I left in the pocket. A few months before I had bought a good hunting-case watch, which I was quite anxious to keep. It could, if necessary, be sold at some time in the future, and should be able to furnish much for comfort. Taking off my hat, I cut a hole in the lining large enough for the watch to be slipped into that hiding-place. But the practical wisdom of my friend (for such I now most sincerely regarded him), who was watching my acts with a deep interest, suggested that it would be a mistake to try to secrete the watch there or anywhere else. "Your hat will be taken off your head the first thing, and some old dish-rag of a thing thrown to you instead. When the other chap finds the watch in it you will be searched all the closer.

I tell you, boy, I have seen so much of this that I know exactly how you will fare. Leave the watch in its pocket, and you may be able to save some of your valuables." Beach did not prove a true prophet in all things, for I retained my hat as long as I was in prison, and only exchanged it in Vicksburg for a new one furnished by "Uncle Sam." The money and penholder I was able to conceal until we arrived at Cahaba, but of them at another time. We were ready now to proceed, and a walk of half a mile brought us to a respectable-looking farm-house, back from the road eight or ten rods, with large shady trees between the house and the road. A few plain chairs were scattered about the lawn under the trees, and in these were seated General Buford and a portion of his staff. Others sat cross-legged on the ground, or reclined upon the grass, or leaned against the trees, chatting pleasantly among themselves as we drew near. The guard, who knew General Buford's face, proceeded directly to him, and giving a slight military salute, reported in usual form the capture of a prisoner. The general asked him in a low voice two or three questions, and I overheard Beach say, "The 'Yanks' drove our picket in with a good deal of spirit, and came close up to our breastworks. They must have been much injured by our fire, for we could hear a good many groaning in the thicket near by as soon as our firing stopped. This fellow was pulled over the breastworks by one of our men. He seems to know

what he is talking about. He says that Smith's whole army was close behind his command." The allusion of Beach to the information possibly to be obtained from his prisoner was less gratifying than the knowledge that he believed our command was supported by a large force close at hand. General Buford's first words were: "Well, boy, what's your regiment?" On being told that it was an Illinois regiment, he manifested considerable interest, and remarked that "he was somewhat acquainted in Illinois," and asked where the different portions of it were raised. On learning that Company "A" were from Rock Island, he inquired regarding its officers, and seemed to know the names of one or two of them. He also asked who was the colonel of the regiment. I do not remember whether Buford had been an officer in the old regular army, but think he had known our colonel (A. G. Brackett, before the war a captain in the United States Third Cavalry) as a regular army captain. Leaving these questions of a more personal nature, he questioned regarding the strength of General A. J. Smith's command and of many other matters of which I had no doubt he was better informed than I was: how large was our force—were we sent out to fight Forrest or to move to some distant point? His object was simply to confirm opinions already formed, and perhaps learn some of the minutiae that might be of value. A few days before I had met, for the first

time since the war, an old friend who was an officer on the staff of General Smith, and in a long conversation with him had learned much regarding the command not before known to me—the strength of the infantry, cavalry, and artillery, the expectations of General Smith, the estimated strength of Confederates likely to be met. I had also learned much regarding General Smith himself, for my friend had been upon his staff for many months, and had formed a very high estimate of his military ability. So far as I had reason to suppose, General Buford possessed correct information. I gave when possible correct answers to his questions, and, so far as I deemed it possible to mislead him, tried to do so. In the same yard where General Buford had his headquarters I noticed leaning against a tree, near enough to hear all that was said, an officer upon whose coat-collar were the insignia of a brigadier-general. During a moment's pause in the running conversation, I quietly asked Beach, who was near by, the name of this silent, attentive man, and learned that it was General Chalmers. The discovery was of much interest, since I was fairly familiar with his history. Chalmers was the son of a former United States Senator; was previous to the war a lawyer by profession, and had taken a prominent part in the secession of his State. In person he was a rather small man, quiet in manner, asking only a few questions himself, but paying close attention to the questions of



others and their answers. He had by that time won an enviable reputation for personal bravery, and was more an object of interest to me than General Buford. He has been, since the war, a State Senator in Mississippi, and for several terms a Member of Congress from his adopted State.

For fully an hour the conversation continued, since there was nothing occurring to the troops under Buford that demanded his attention, the talk relating principally to the expeditions of Sooy Smith, the Sturgis disaster, our own estimation of Sturgis, Sooy Smith, Grierson, etc., the acts of our troops in different parts of Mississippi, the sentiment of our soldiers regarding the employment of negroes as soldiers, the Fort Pillow affair, etc. Buford was a portly, fat-faced, jovial man, who often chuckled in the course of his remarks, and never seemed to take offence at criticisms not complimentary to the cause or men with whom he was allied. In dealing with the boy prisoner he seemed possessed of the good-nature that characterized the gigantic Brobdingnags in their treatment of the insignificant Gulliver, and regarded as amusing remarks that perhaps from one of more consequence would have been received in a different spirit. He several times suggested that we did not govern ourselves by the principles of civilized warfare, and at length asked, "If you consider yourselves as carrying on a civilized warfare, why did your army burn Ripley a few days ago?"

Now Ripley was a village on the line of the retreat of the Union troops in their flight from the disastrous field of Guntown, and while our straggling forces were hurrying through it a few weeks before in disorder, after their humiliating defeat, many shots were fired at them from the houses of the village. I stated this fact to him, and suggested that if the Confederates used the houses to shelter themselves—used them as fortifications, we considered it proper to treat them as fortifications, and destroy them when captured. He did not admit that the statement as to their use for fortifications was correct, but turned the talk to the Sooy Smith raid, and with good-humored, bantering words spoke of the affection of the Northern soldiers and Northern Government for their “niggers,” and wanted to know what we found so lovable about them that made us carry back from the Sooy Smith raid over five thousand colored people. Answering seriously, I informed him that in that five thousand were enough good, active, intelligent fellows to form a large regiment; that they were now doing duty as such at Memphis, and had permitted us to take an equal number of white soldiers from such less important service and put them in the field. “Those that are not fit for soldiers can be put to the work of building fortifications, working about the quartermaster’s and commissary department, doing fatigue duty, and relieving white men from such work. The

average wenches are utilized for cooks, and the better-looking ones are appropriated by the officers. Perhaps some of *your* officers can tell me more than *I* know about this subject." Shaking his sides with laughter, he said, "Well, you seem to know what niggers are good for. Guard, you can take this fellow back to the provost guard now."

## CHAPTER VII.

THE PROVOST GUARD PROCEED TO TAKE AN INVENTORY OF THE PRISONER'S PERSONAL PROPERTY—HE RECEIVES MANY UNDESIRABLE ATTENTIONS—REMARKABLE INSTINCT OF THE AVERAGE PROVOST GUARD—ANOTHER "BOY IN BLUE"—MISERY LOVES COMPANY—TAKEN TO THE REAR OF THE BATTLE-FIELD OF TUPELO.

THE provost guard were farther down the road, and after inquiring more particularly where to find them, Beach started with me toward them. Scarcely had we come within their sight when two or three of their number, who seemed almost to have been on the watch for their legitimate prey, came toward us. Their advance at first was hesitating—they were hardly certain whether the stranger was one of their kind of prizes or not. But a nearer view showed them a pair of blue pants, and an unarmed prisoner by the side of an evident guard; and each then enlivened his step. Beach noted this, and turning to me, laughingly said, "Now may the Lord have mercy on you, for these fellows don't look as if they were coming on errands



of mercy." That an errand of mercy was somewhat foreign to their mission was evidenced by a salutation of one when he was distant two or three rods—"G—d d—n you, let's see your boots!" Very evidently *boots*, and not any desire to perform angelic deeds, were uppermost in his mind. A few days before my foot had been injured, and to relieve the pressure at the injured point several parallel slits had been made in the leather. That particular boot was presented for his inspection. He was disgusted, but did not fully decide not to exchange with me until he had compared the size with his own. He could not possibly squeeze his "No. 10" foot into a "No. 6" boot, so directed his inquiries to other articles of mine that were more available.

Beach walked with me to the officer in charge, and delivered his captive over to his custody. Quite soon an inventory was taken of the worldly goods in my possession by several of the guards. One appropriated my pocket-knife, another took the small change left in my wallet, a third transferred to his own pocket some trinkets he found in mine, and the officer in command said he would take my watch for fear it might be stolen. He remarked that it would be turned over to the next officer in whose custody I might be placed. It was kind in him to guard my interests so well; but unfortunately, like many another man with good intentions, he was dreadfully absent-minded; for when I

inquired for my watch at Okolona a few days after, I was told that the provost officer had forgotten to send it along. Till then I had really placed confidence in his words. Whatever may have been the other imperfections and moral blemishes justly attributable to the average Northern soldier who served in the West, I believe he usually regarded the taking of personal property other than weapons from the pockets of his captives as ignominious. The Western soldier only is spoken of, as non-acquaintance with the Eastern army permits of no expression of opinion. Yet no one should infer from this statement that he religiously respected the rights of all others at all times. Beach manifested a loathing of the robbing of a captive equal to that of any of his foes. During and for some time after the Civil War much bitterness was entertained against the Confederates by the soldiers and people of the North for their practice of taking from captives so large a portion of their personal effects. It is probably safe to state that a half or even more of Union soldiers, especially when taken in small squads, were compelled to deliver over to their captors blankets, boots, hats, the contents of their pockets, and sometimes even their body clothing. In a small proportion of cases dilapidated or worthless articles of the same kind were given in return, and these unwilling exchanges were called a "swap." Such acts were characterized by the captives as mean and shameful, and a comparison

as to the treatment of the captured Confederates was often made that was disparaging to the Southrons. Among prisoners there was a general feeling that their treatment in that particular was infamous. Yet it must be admitted that the conduct of the Confederates in the matter of stripping their captives might be excused when we remember that though they themselves, when taken in battle, were probably more generously treated than they had treated their prisoners, their homes were often stripped of everything eatable or of value.

When the absent soldier received from his wife a letter describing a visit from those she styled "modern Vandals," and told of the horses ridden away, the mules seized for draft animals, the cattle and swine and poultry killed and eaten before their eyes by a hungry horde, the corn fed to regiments of cavalry horses or piled into great government wagons and hauled away, the meat-house broken into and robbed of hams, shoulders, and side-meat, the house entered and meal, flour, sugar, coffee, eggs, milk, and syrup spirited away, sometimes by men with courteous manners, sometimes by rough boors, he lost fastidiousness, had fewer scruples about taking things, anything and everything, from those of his foes whom the fortunes of war might throw into his power.

The Northern soldier justified his acts by the fact that his antagonists were rebels, and as such, by

the common usages of nations, they forfeited claims that would be accorded an independent nation. The ordinarily generous treatment of his Confederate captive by the Union soldier in his opinion bespoke a similar treatment for himself. The treatment that the home of the Confederate received made him excuse the harsh treatment of the Union prisoner by himself or his comrades. How our different situations modify our views! The provost guard was a detail from a Louisiana regiment, though some of them were citizens of Mississippi. It consisted of the considerate lieutenant who forgot to forward my watch, Sergeant James Teer, a corporal, and eight or ten privates. The lieutenant held himself aloof from his command, and was little seen. The corporal and privates were average men, some fairly companionable, others more distant; but with Sergeant Teer social intercourse was quite easy. His home was at some small town south of Jackson, Miss. (Hazlehurst, I think). A man slightly past young manhood, he had been in the Confederate Army from nearly the beginning of the war. Possessed originally of a pleasant, easy-going disposition, his three years of soldier life had rather confirmed his good-tempered tendencies. He cared little to manifest his authority over his men, and while he himself extended to his captive the good-humored manner innate in him, he never prohibited any amount of swearing at his prisoner with which spec-



tators, and sometimes even his privates, regaled themselves. As I was the only prisoner in the possession of the provost guard, an innumerable number of questions was asked by the members of the regiments near by, and memory recalls that day as one floating in a haze of interrogation points. The same questions were asked over and over again by different persons as they came by, and were no sooner answered than a fresh arrival would come forward and repeat the questions with some variations. It was not difficult to maintain a conversation, for every man of General A. J. Smith's command was fully possessed of the belief that in the contest our arms would blot out the disgrace with which, by the miserable conduct of General Sturgis, they had been clouded. Even to this day, when I meet with a soldier who was present at the Sturgis disaster, the mention of the occasion will always bring the hot blood of resentment to his cheeks, and the same feeling at that time made every man, from colonel to private, determined that victory should be ours. And the feeling was strengthened and intensified by the knowledge that in General Smith we had a leader worthy of the troops he commanded. The *certainly* of success gave to the men a buoyancy and exhilaration such as I venture few armies possessed during our whole war. Remarks directed to the single prisoner, however, were not all civil questions. Men would ride close to the position

of the guard, and looking steadily for a few moments at their prisoner, would hiss out, "D—n the white-livered, blue-bellied devil!" "Dog-on his ornery heart, I'd like to shoot him!" And in a moment of quiet, during a conversation with some civil fellow, often would be heard from a cantankerous chap behind him—"D—n the abolition puppy, I'd like to wear him out!" And thus filled with the most intense pleasure (if pleasure can be born of vindictive thoughts) at the prospective victory, and filled with a bitter resentment at the scurrilous, insulting epithets poured out so freely, the hours of the day passed by. Just before dark—the sun had gone down, and twilight had settled upon the place—two Confederate soldiers were seen a short distance away approaching our location. A few steps in advance of them was a man dressed in blue, evidently a prisoner who had been picked up during the day. At first there was a possibility that he was one of the enemy, wearing a portion of the uniform of a Federal; but as he came nearer, all doubts were removed, for several of the guards, who seemed possessed of a marvellous instinct for recognizing a Federal prisoner—an instinct allied to that of the buzzard in the neighborhood of its spoil—eagerly went toward him, and without the formality even of saying "by your leave," began an inspection of his hat and boots, and asked an inventory of his pockets.

What a revulsion of feeling in me the blessed sight

of that man produced ! A vision of the blue vault of paradise filled with the bright faces of friends who have gone before could not have been more beautiful to me at that time than was the sight of his blue uniform. All day, save from my friend Beach, hardly a kindly or even a civil word had been addressed to me. Not a half hour had been passed in which imprecations, oaths, and malevolent wishes against me had not come to my ears. As much comfort would be given to a vicious and dangerous wild beast that a rural community, with much painstaking, have entrapped ; every breath I had taken seemed drawn from an atmosphere of ill-will or hatred. True, I could not unreservedly censure my antagonists ; for doubtless among them were men whose homes had been rendered desolate by our own command ; but that possible fact only rendered my enforced abode with them more uncomfortable. I had eaten nothing since early in the morning, and blessed with vigorous health, the pangs of hunger were hard to endure ; but the social hunger for a sympathetic look or word was greater than the physical. There was nothing in the personal appearance of the new-comer that ordinarily should awaken strong emotion, but his coming, the uniform he wore, the fact that he was a Federal soldier, a comrade, appeased the spiritual thirst, the yearning for companionship, and my heart went out to him as it had ne'er gone out before to any human being. I

could have cried for joy as he approached us. As the stranger drew nearer, and saw another in the same condition, his face became less downcast, and in a few minutes we seemed to each other to have had an acquaintance of years. His name was Frazier, of the Twenty-first Missouri Infantry; he had been captured at noon while the regiment was halted for dinner. Wishing some berries near by, he had walked a short distance from camp, and been "taken in" by a couple of Confederate scouts who were watching our forces from that point. Frazier was not the best type of a soldier, so far as military bearing and appearance went. He talked but little even when questioned, and when cursed by the Confederates for being in the Yankee army while he was a Missourian, he bore the abusive epithets applied to him in silence, or offered but a weak defence. Two or three bystanders, before he had been in charge of the provost guard ten minutes, expressed their disgust at his political apostasy, and he pursued the policy of pleading a sort of passive guilt that he might lessen his punishment.

By this time it was quite dark, and the commander of the guard decided to move from the place where we had spent the day. The new place of bivouac was distant about half a mile, and was an open field by the side of a piece of woods sufficiently free from underbrush to afford an excellent place for caring for their horses. The wooded part near by was appropri-



ated by the guard, while a part of the open field, about two rods square, was designated as our quarters for the night. Four guards were placed about us, one in each angle of the square facing inward. Neither Frazier nor myself had a blanket; each had only a shirt, hat, pants, and boots. Although it was midsummer and the days were hot, yet we knew that a heavy dew was usually formed during the night, and could we but be permitted to seek the shelter of a tree, the situation would have been more endurable. A request to this end was peremptorily refused with what seemed to us more surliness than was necessary. Then we asked the guard if he could not let us have some sort of a blanket to keep the heavy dew off. "I don't know nothin' about anybody 'at's got two blankets," was his reply. "Well, then, could you not get us a horse blanket or a piece of one?" I inquired. "I reckon there ain't none for you," was all that we could get out of the churl. So we learned without further investigation that that open piece of field was ours, and there was no use in trying to have it modified or improved. We could use the green sward for our mattress, and the starry canopy only could we have for our covering.

We made the best of our surroundings, and lay down on the ground together as close to each other as possible, and chilled and shivered through the night, and perhaps were lost in sleep a part of the

time, until about half-past two, when the order came for the command that was camped all around us to saddle up and move out. Near us, by the side of a large log, some of the soldiers had built a bright fire, for the purpose of cooking their breakfast, and after they were gone we asked the guard (not the one of the previous evening) the privilege of going near the fire to warm ourselves, for we were chilled through and through; and the request, to our surprise, was granted, and Frazier and myself were soon comparatively comfortable, and again fell asleep, before the day dawned, by the side of the burning embers. How long we had lain there I do not know—probably two or three hours. The exposure and fatigue of the previous day rendered sleep most delicious. In dreams I was back with comrades and friends, and was telling them of the manner of my capture; of the deception practised to impress the enemy with the belief that they were to be charged by a strong force; how the deception had caused them to move back into the field behind them instead of attempting the capture of our battalion; of the long conversation with the Confederate general; of the rather unpleasant experiences of the remainder of the day, when a conversation carried on by our guards and some citizens aroused me to semi-consciousness. Dream and reality were queerly mixed, yet there remained enough of the dream to make the situation decidedly pleasant. The

sun had warmed the atmosphere. The noise and hum and hurry of a few hours before had vanished, and a stillness, a sweet stillness, like the Sabbath mornings I knew in childhood, possessed the vicinity. The conversation ceased for a few minutes; then, beginning again, awakened me sufficiently to bring back the reality of my surroundings. Two old farmers, living a mile or two away, had come to the place where the army had bivouacked the night before, and finding the whole body departed except the dozen guards, had drawn near to them. Frazier had awakened some time before, and sitting down on the opposite side of the log, was being plied with questions by these old dullards, who, learning that he was a resident of Missouri, were upbraiding him for his apostasy in being in the Northern army. Poor Frazier, though possessed of strong convictions and (as an intimate acquaintance in later months convinced me) of unswerving loyalty, he had probably never entered into a discussion of the subject with any one, and weak and shallow as were their arguments, he was wholly at their mercy. The first of the conversation had taken place before I had awakened, but from the remarks of the old men it was evident that they had drawn out from him the fact of his residence in Missouri; then they had sneered at him for being a Southern man and serving in the ranks of the abolitionists. "What do you uns want to come down here and pester us for?" etc., etc. As on

the previous evening, when the same stereotyped questions had been asked him, Frazier half assented to the justice of their position by pleading ignorance of the causes and conduct of the war, and offered only weak excuses for being in the Union army.

One of the guards, who took quite an interest in the colloquy, seemed to have as little esteem for the old citizens as if they had been in Frazier's place, and especially seemed to wish that Frazier would be more than a match for them in the argument; for citizens, as a rule, were detested by Confederate soldiers, even though they were, by reason of age, exempt from military service. After listening to the one-sided argument for many minutes, when they had driven Frazier into silence, the guard turned to them and said, "Well, old gents, you seem to be too much for this fellow, but you'll strike a 'Yank' now and then that kin wind you round his finger. Don't jedge 'em all by this chap." Although I had been fully awake for many minutes, I feigned sleep for a short time, and when at length I sat up, the old "Butternuts" tried to start a controversy with me. But I felt it would give them too much satisfaction, and kept silent as long as they remained with us.

No food of any kind was furnished us the first day, but in the forenoon of the second day some hardtack and bacon was brought to us, and we were hungry enough to regard it as a royal feast, only that the



quantity was exceedingly limited. The first day, while so many strangers, men from other regiments, were interviewing us, our guards were exceedingly distant and gruff; but after the main body of the army had gone away, and our numbers were but few, a friendly intimacy was manifested by several of the guards, and even those who had been so disobliging on the day before were now fairly civil. Near by was a small creek, in some places deep enough to bathe in easily. We asked permission to go to it and bathe, and a couple of the more obliging guards volunteered to accompany us. At night, while we were not supplied with blankets, we were permitted to gather wood and build a fire near a low-limbed tree, and the guards replenished it during the night, and stood by it for their own comfort. The night was much more comfortable than the previous one, as the tree sheltered us from the heavy dew, and on waking we were more refreshed than at any time since our captivity.

Early in the morning of the third day (July 14th) an order came for the guard to move north, and to the rear of their main army. There was no command to move with haste, only the bare direction for such a move, so we sauntered along leisurely toward the specified place until a little past noon, when we heard the "thud" of a distant cannon, an announcement that the battle of Tupelo had begun, and our pace was quickened. In half an hour we met a

citizen who, in reply to the questionings of our guards seeking information, exultingly told us that "our men had got them into a good place, and are now just beginning to whip h—l out of them." Half a mile farther and another citizen, coming from the same direction, repeated the same story, and added, "Our men are just more than wearing them out!" But, notwithstanding such satisfactory reports, our guards were quite anxious to get to the rear of their army, and repeatedly urged us to walk as fast as we could, and even suggested that we take hold of the straps attached to the sides of their saddles as a further aid to locomotion. The next person coming toward us was a soldier, a courier carrying despatches to a command distant a few miles. He had just come from the battle-field, and had witnessed just before starting an unsuccessful charge of the Confederates upon one of our strongly posted lines. The exultation so plainly visible upon the faces of the citizens was absent from his, and in reply to a question from Sergeant Teer as to how the battle was progressing, he halted his panting horse for a few moments, and a deep shade of concern was on his countenance as he told the sergeant in a low voice, "The Yankees are fighting like h—l!"

Next we met three or four skulkers, one on foot, the others on horseback. Their stories were conflicting, though in the main cheering to the Confeder-

ates. All this time we were approaching nearer to the combatants, and the dull thud of the distant cannon changed to a more pronounced roar. The sharp rattle of musketry became more and more distinct, increasing in volume until at times the separate volleys were continuous. Occasionally a distant yell would proclaim the beginning of a charge or some important event, and once or twice, after a fire of musketry more heavy than common, we heard a prolonged cheer that Frazier and I interpreted as an omen of victory to our comrades.

We had passed the last skulkers but a few minutes when an officer came riding to us in haste, and without waiting to be questioned, said: "Our men have been fearfully cut up in one of their charges, but old Forrest will eat 'em up before he is through with 'em!" He also directed Sergeant Teer to pass through a field near by and follow an untravelled road for a mile or so, as that would be safer should any party of Yankees be thrown out on their flank.

## CHAPTER VIII.

HUNDREDS OF EMPTY SADDLES—THE WOUNDED TEXAN  
—HIS ORDER TO SERGEANT TEER—MAJOR MORGAN  
FORWARDED TO OKOLONA—THE AUTOCRATIC BOY  
GUARDS.

I COULD scarcely credit the stories of the men who had told of our army being so roughly handled, for General Smith's command had come out for the express purpose of fighting—not to repeat the criminal, cowardly tactics of General Sturgis, nor to enact over again the retreat of General Sooy Smith; and no army of equal numbers could, with safety to themselves, treat them as inferiors.

When the Confederate officer stated the result of one of their attacks, and expressed the opinion that General Forrest would "eat them up" before he was through with the engagement, we could not help noting that he himself felt there was a possibility of our army not only taking care of the front of the Confederates, but giving them trouble on the flank; and his suggestion to Sergeant Teer to get in the rear of the Confederates as quickly and with as



little risk as possible seemed a contradiction of his prophecy regarding the promised cannibalistic performance of General Forrest.

Hastening through the by-way pointed out to us, we came to a point quite to the rear of the Confederates, and there found a portion of their quartermaster's train and a large number of non-combatants and stragglers, as well as a few who had been to the front and were slightly wounded.

We had been there but a short time when a large open space in the woods near us began to be filled up with men leading riderless horses, on the saddles of which I could occasionally see dark streaks of blood.

The feeling of exultation that involuntarily arose at these evidences of their rough treatment by our troops was much modified and repressed by the remarks of the men who accompanied them, some of which we overheard as they passed.

"Poor Sam," said one, "got a Yankee bullet through his lung, and we had to leave him where he fell off his horse." "Big Joe, of Company F, has lost his leg at the knee; he fainted and fell off his horse, and when the doctor came along with the ambulance, he said 'that leg was a-goner.'" Said another: "My poor chum will never ride any more; a piece of a shell cut off the side of his head and killed him instantly, just as we were going into that charge."

Men who go into battle, however, must expect the

chances of battle, and with such a reflection it was easy to dismiss all uncomfortable sympathy. It was doubly easy for us after having endured two long days of cursing and cowardly taunts.

Sergeant Teer halted near a large tree, and under it Frazier and I sat down. We had been there ten or fifteen minutes when a colonel, with his arm bandaged and carried in a sling, rode up and hailed the guard angrily, mistaking them for skulkers, and demanded what they were hiding out there for, and why they were not with their commands, as they should be. "We are guarding prisoners," replied the sergeant. "Prisoners? where are they?" asked the colonel, doubtfully. Where we were sitting, as we were half hidden from view by the tree, we were easily overlooked, and under the circumstances the suspicions of the colonel were warrantable. Doubtless the sergeant's answer would have been satisfactory, but our delight at the fearful defeat they had received and were then receiving made me foolhardy; so, when he asked where are the prisoners, I spoke out, "Here are your Yankees." "Yankees be d—d," was his only remark as he turned his back to us in contempt.

Addressing himself to Sergeant Teer, he told of the severity of the battle still in progress, in which he had received, or pretended to have received, a bullet wound in the arm.

At the end of his remarks he turned to me

and asked, "How many men have you up yonder?" His manner had been insolent, and his reference to our army in his conversation with Sergeant Teer had been maddening. I wanted to irritate him, so I replied, "You have seen them since I have; you ought to know." Then he asked the question again with an implied threat, and in turn I replied, "Why don't you go up where they are and count them, or did you try it and find it unhealthy?" The idea of a despised Yankee speaking to him in that manner was more than his official highness could endure. At the same moment an orderly riding near him spoke up, "We can make the —— son —— —— tell." The words of the orderly were as oil poured upon a flame. The rage of the colonel was at white heat. He swore at the guard and at me: at me for my impudence, at the guard for permitting it; and finally, exhausting his vocabulary of invective, fairly yelled, "G—d d—n you. Kill him, somebody. I will myself."

While conversing with Sergeant Teer he had dismounted from his horse and fastened him to a small tree a little distance away. He had no arms on his person while pouring out his imprecations upon me, and as he screamed, "I'll kill him myself," he went hastily toward his saddle, where his pistol was. During the colloquy between us I had arisen from the ground, and was standing as he turned to his saddle. One of the guards, with an oath, ordered me to sit down upon

the ground, bade me drop my arms down by my side, and swore with a horrible oath that he'd blow my d—d abolition head off if I dared to speak another word or move an inch.

By the time the enraged colonel had returned with his pistol I was sitting with my back to a tree, my head thrown back, the guard pointing his cocked rifle at my breast, and I as completely under his subjection as the most exacting tyrant could wish. For the colonel to have carried out his threat with me in such a position would have been simply murder, and full of hatred as he was, he could hardly afford to do so cowardly or barbarous an act; but turning to the guard, after cursing me again, he told them that a body of Yankee cavalry had been observed marching around their flank, possibly with the intention of attacking the Confederate flank or rear. He said:

“If you hear any firing in the rear, and feel that there is a probability of their recapturing these sons ———, shoot them on the spot and take care of yourselves.”

He mounted his horse immediately and started off, but stopped a moment and repeated his order as to the disposition to be made of the prisoners in case of an attack, and added, “I am the colonel of the ——— Texas Regiment, an’ by ——— I mean what I say.” I did not plainly hear the number of his regiment, so cannot, unfortunately, give his infamous name



to history. I hardly think Sergeant Teer would have obeyed the order if there had been an attack upon their rear, but I was very glad to have the afternoon pass away with firing only in our front.

During the year that we were stationed along the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, our command had scouted the country along its line on both sides in West Tennessee and Northern Mississippi very thoroughly, and we had become quite well acquainted with many citizens. Among the number was a Mrs. Morgan, whose husband was a major in the Confederate service. She was a black-eyed, dashing brunette, whose tongue was never at a loss for words, and who, though she often gave our troops a smart verbal lashing with no seeming exertion, now and then gave utterance to some expressions that made me think much of her talk was "put on," and that at heart she had no great hatred for the so-called "accursed Yankees."

Near the spot where I was so sharply compelled to sit down and remain speechless during the episode with the Texan colonel was the headquarters of a commissary department. The officer in charge of the commissary stores, being near, had heard a portion of the conversation between the colonel and myself, and in due time came closer and entered into a conversation with me. I felt that he did not fully sympathize with the cowardly colonel and the pusillanimous

guards, so I was quite willing to reply to his questions, and soon was pleasantly engaged in a rambling discussion of soldier life. At length some one spoke to him, calling him by the name of Morgan. Noting that his rank was that of major, I remarked to him that I knew a lady by that name whose husband I understood was a major in the C. S. A. In reply to this he propounded a question or two as to where the lady resided and where I had met her, etc., and upon being satisfactorily answered, he informed me that she was his wife. This proved to be a fortunate circumstance, and my partial acquaintance with his wife became a passport to his good-will, and he shortly afterward asked me if I was well supplied with food. I frankly admitted to him that we were not getting fat—that no sanitarian could be more careful to guard us from gluttony than were our captors; and that, next to a desire for liberty and to lend a helping hand to hang that detested Texan colonel, would be the pleasurable sensation of a well-filled stomach.

The statement was sufficient, and that evening, for the first time since our capture, did we have sufficient food to allay the gnawings of hunger. And when we parted from him the next morning he gave both Frazier and myself all the food we could stow away in our pockets and shirt fronts. It is not always judicious to tell a gentleman who is absent from home

much of the time that his wife is charming, but Frazier and I decided that we were gainers by the venture this time.

On the morning following we were ordered to be taken to Okolona, a town on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, distant about ten miles.

We started at ten o'clock, and as the day was quite warm, and we walked the distance, it was about two P.M. before we arrived there.

Arrived at Okolona, we were taken to the provost marshal of the town; our names, company, and regiment were recorded, and we were then sent to the guard-house, a one-story wooden building that had at one time been a store, but, like most stores in the small towns of Mississippi, its proprietor had closed out his business and gone into the rebel army, or had fled to the woods to avoid conscription.

In the guard-house we found a half dozen men, some Yankees, some rebels; the rebels had been put in for various causes: one was suspected of being a Union man; another, although not accused of any such heresy, had not complied with some military orders; another was supposed to be a Yankee spy; and, although he claimed to them to be simply a private citizen, to me he privately admitted that he was a Northern man, and in full sympathy with Northern principles.

I regarded the fellow with considerable suspicion, feeling that he was as likely to be a Confederate as a

Unionist—probably because of his having expressed before some Confederates his contempt for and disgust of Northern men. He was especially irritating in his remarks upon “old baboon Lincoln,” as he called him.

When the soldiers were removed from Okolona, this man, who passed by the name of George Carlisle, was left behind; and while we were at Meridian, we learned that, a few days after our departure, he enlisted in the Confederate Army, and deserted the first night, taking with him an abundance of pistols, a rifle, and one of the finest horses in the country. He was at that time a spy of General A. J. Smith—a most daring and trusted scout; and when he made his escape, carried to General Smith information very much desired.

Of men wearing the uniform of our soldiers, one was called Smith, and belonged to an Indiana regiment. In later months I learned that his name of Smith was assumed, and in all probability he was a bounty-jumper—a class of men possessed of no principle, who enlisted only for the bounty given, and deserted to enlist again and obtain another bounty. Another soldier was a member of an Ohio regiment who had been picked up while loitering behind his command a few days before.

Our guards were boys of fifteen to seventeen years, and men too old or too feeble to do the severe duty of a soldier in the field. Of the men we had little to



complain. They simply required us to comport ourselves as prisoners might reasonably be expected to do, and manifested no desire to give us unnecessary trouble. I wish I could say as much for the contemptible young whelps who were their comrades.

Not one of the soldiers who were there had been captured while having in their possession any of their cooking utensils, and none had been furnished to them by the Confederates.

No fuel was provided for us except a few barrels of old, half-rotten chips that were scattered over the ground near the back door. Those on the surface were fairly dry and could be coaxed into a state of combustion by long-continued and vigorous blowing; but no amount of labor could procure a blaze. The deeper layers were so damp that they were only fit for fuel when selected and carefully placed in the sun until dry. Scarcely any chip was larger than the half of a man's hand, so in making a fire it was necessary to place them carefully to have any draft of air draw through the pile.

Our ration at Okolona was coarse corn-meal, a pint and a half a day. No salt, no fat, no meat, no bread—simply coarse corn-meal, and nothing was furnished to cook it in. The *menu* presented something of a contrast to that which I have since seen. One man had a canteen, which we were allowed to fill with water from a well near by. The process of bread-making

was devoid of all mystery. It required simply the taking of a handful of meal in your hands and getting your comrade to pour upon it some water from the canteen ; when wet enough to stick together, this was made into a thin cake and placed upon the smouldering chips. Before it was so thoroughly smoked as to render it entirely unfit to swallow, the cake was removed from the pile and the repast was ready. To be sure, a part was burned to a coal, part was nearly raw, and all was saturated with smoke ; but when such food is all one can get, it is eaten to supply the demands of hunger.

Bad as was our miserable food, it was better than those hateful young tyrants—autocrats—who were placed to watch over us. Their will was law ; their will was anything to remind us how fully we were under their control, and how helpless to resist them.

One day a Union soldier was standing near a window when a citizen came along and, looking into the building, spoke to the guard, and also addressed a question to the Union soldier, to which he respectfully replied. He then asked the guard which were Yankees and which were Southern men.

It was the custom, too common among the chivalric soldiers of the Confederacy, to change clothing with prisoners whenever they could be the gainers by such a swap ; so it was not always possible to know whether a prisoner was a rebel or a Northern man.

At this time the " Yankee" had on a gray shirt and

gray hat; hence the citizen mistook him for a Confederate, and the guard had the same idea until another citizen told them he was not. At that moment the Yankee was standing near a window, looking out; the guard asked him if he was a d—d Yankee, and he replied that he was a Union soldier. "What in h—l are you near that window for, then? G—d d—n you, go back thar" (into the back part of the room). Then he cocked his musket and aimed at him, swearing all the time. His rage knew no bounds. He made him sit down on the floor, against the wall, hold up his head, drop his hands, and ordered him to not move a hair's breadth so long as he was on duty at that time.

When he had made him sit as still as a statue for a few moments, he turned to the citizen, and, with a manner full of self-importance, remarked: "There, that's the way I make the d—d Yankees mind when I'm around." He would have been glad if "the d—d Yankee" had been slow to do his bidding, for then he would have had a good excuse for shooting a "cursed blue-coat."

There was no rule prohibiting us from looking out of the window; it was simply the whim of a boy brought up to despise Northern men, which became law for the time. In another hour all Union soldiers might have been driven to the window with as much tyrannical display. This little episode was but a fair example of what occurred at all hours of the day while we remained at Okolona.

## CHAPTER IX.

FROM OKOLONA TO MERIDIAN—THE ONE DAY IN  
NINE MONTHS WHEN OUR MESS HAD ENOUGH  
FOOD—A RUNAWAY NEGRO—J. J. FITZPATRICK—  
ORDERED TO SELMA, ALA.

THE Sunday after our arrival at Okolona, we were taken to the train and started for Meridian, distant probably one hundred and twenty-five miles. The train, which had come from Tupelo, was composed of five or six passenger cars, all of which were loaded with the Confederate wounded from the field of Tupelo, except the rear car. In this car we found a dozen or more prisoners who had been captured during the previous few days, a runaway negro, and his slave-hunting guard.

As it was Sunday, every station had a large crowd of spectators who had gathered there to see the wounded, many of whom were their friends. A large number had brought delicacies with them, intended as offerings to the wounded or their attendants.

At the first station after leaving Okolona one or two ladies were about to pass some of their food into



our car, but were prevented by the guard, who explained that our car was filled only by "cursed Yankees." In fact, at all stations they tried to prevent our receiving any food.

But as we stopped frequently, and often only for a few moments, so great was the haste of some of the donors to dispose of their gifts, that hardly would the train slow up before our windows (which fortunately were kept open) would be filled with cakes, pies, baked and broiled chicken, boiled green corn, melons and sweet potatoes, intended, to be sure, not for Yankees, but for their own soldiers. Although our guards were exceedingly active to prevent all such mishaps, we had not passed a dozen stations before we were quite well supplied with food, while the quantity was usually increased at every succeeding station.

How delicious that food tasted after the days of subsistence upon the wretched, smoky, charred meal-and-water mixtures of Okolona! And so hungry were we that everything, for a time, that was passed into our windows was devoured almost without mastication.

By the middle of the afternoon, however, we had satisfied our hunger and began to save up what was not eaten, believing that we might need it in the prison to which we were being taken.

That Sunday was the only day I passed in the Confederacy during which I did not feel the gnawings

of hunger, save when disease drove away all desire for any food, and made the sight of such as we could prepare doubly repugnant.

It was a source of constant amusement to note the words and looks of the Southern women and the few men who had unconsciously contributed to our necessities at the various stations we passed. They were in such haste to force their contributions upon us through the car windows (believing us Confederates) that they heeded not the remonstrance of the guard until too late to retrieve their acts; but when the fact that we were Union soldiers dawned upon them, it was indeed ludicrous to observe the expressions of self-reproach that were depicted upon their countenances. The men uttered a growl or an oath, the women scolded sharply, often saying, "Why didn't you tell us before?" "I did tell you," would be the reply, "but you wouldn't pay any attention." "The nasty Yankees, I wish they'd all been killed," replied one. "Here, you Yankees, give me back my pies and chicken," yelled others. "We didn't want you uns to have it; why didn't you tell us you were Yankees?" and other similar remarks.

No doubt our success in this regard was in a great measure owing to a happy thought of one of our number, to keep such of us as were dressed in gray, or partly so, next to the windows. As I had on a gray shirt and hat, I had an opportunity to reply to such

questions and reproaches many times during the day.

Among the new prisoners we found on the train was a man who belonged to the Twelfth Iowa Infantry; his nickname was "Pud," and in after months we became strong friends. A printer by trade, he was a young man of pleasant wit and much good-humor. He had been forced to swap clothing with his previous guards, until he had no shoes, a ragged coat and pants, and a shabby hat; but they were all gray.

He sat just in front of me, and as he handed back empty dishes, he thanked the donors for their hospitality, and sometimes, in mock seriousness, upbraided his comrades for consuming such common food, when they had been feasted for days previous by tender, thoughtful, loving Confederates. His good-humor was contagious, and even our guard came to enjoy it, and sometimes purposely waited until too late before speaking to the citizens at the stations.

The men nearly always growled or swore when told of their mistake, and only once did I hear any expression of sympathy for us, and that came from a woman.

About noon we passed through a small town, and when the usual scene was enacted, a young lady who had passed in her offering was told that we were only Yankees—prisoners. "Well," she replied, "I don't care if they are Yankees; they are unfortunate, and are to be pitied; and I am glad I made the mistake."

She was a blue-eyed, pleasant-faced girl, and as we heard her expression, so opposite to all we had heard before, we were half choked with gratitude ; and when the Iowa boy put aside his serio-comic words and heartily thanked her, many a "Good for you, little lady," was heard from our little band. In later months she was often spoken of with grateful feelings by those who were with us at that time.

All day long the poor runaway negro sat crouched upon the floor, and near him was seated, upon a car-seat, the slave-hunter who was taking him back to a fate worse than death. Several times through the day I heard the white brute growl at the helpless black for having run away from a kind master, and worse than all else was his attempt to join the hated Yankees. Once I heard him say that when he got him home again he "would have cause to remember his attempted escape." Much as we disliked our own future outlook, we could not but think our condition and fate probably most fortunate compared to his ; and doubtless the negro was of the same opinion, for when he arose to leave the car, at a station somewhere south of West Point, we observed a sickly, faint expression settled upon his countenance, and a sound—half a groan—escaped from his lips.

In the early evening we rolled into Meridian, and were removed from the train to the stockade.

Meridian at that time was only possessed of one



house that was worthy of the name—the “Jones House”—a hotel situated near our stockade, perhaps a block away. All other buildings had been recently erected, and were one-story shanties made of rough boards and unpainted; nearly all, I think, were used for military purposes.

The previous February General W. T. Sherman had made a raid from Vicksburg as far east as Meridian, expecting our cavalry force, under W. Sooy Smith, to meet him at Meridian, and with him move on to Montgomery, Ala., or to some other point. Sooy Smith was an inefficient commander, and we were severely defeated at the battle of Ivy Hills, and but for the brigade of Grierson, and the faith we had in General Grierson, our whole command might have been worse defeated, perhaps captured. We returned to Memphis after having destroyed a vast amount of Confederate property, and carrying back with us five thousand able-bodied negroes, the major portion of whom were enlisted as soldiers. General Sherman remained at Meridian for a week, destroyed the depots, Confederate storehouses, rolling stock, tore up the railroad for many miles, north, south, east, and west of the town, heated the rails and twisted them about the trees, and learning that Smith was driven back by the force of General Polk, he returned to Vicksburg, leaving only one house standing at this important intersection of railroads.

The town before the war was one of little importance, but the large amount of Confederate property gathered there in the early part of 1864 rendered it of more value at that time.

Much of the land surrounding the hamlet was low, and covered with a dense growth of pine trees; on the edge of the forest a stockade had been built, embracing an acre of ground; the stockade consisted of the usual sixteen-foot logs stood on end and sunk two or three feet into the ground. Near the top, upon the the outside, a walk had been raised upon which persons could look down into the enclosure. Guards were placed at the front (and for that matter the only entrance) during the day, and during the night extra guards were placed about the stockade on the outer side. Two log-cabins were within the enclosure, each capable of holding (furnishing sleeping-places to) twenty or thirty men. When we entered we found a dozen or more persons confined for various reasons. One was a wounded negro Union soldier, who had been captured in some outpost near Memphis, and had received his wound while defending his post. One was a man from Skowhegan, Me., who had been a citizen of Alabama for many years, but who had never been in the rebel army. Several were deserters from the rebel army. Two or three had been conscripted, and were being held there until they could be sent to their designated regiments. Two or three

were citizens, who were confined for reasons I could not learn.

Of these latter, one was an old man, who would have been noticeable among hundreds. His tall form was stooped ; his long hair, once as black as night, was now streaked with gray, and brushed back from his brow, showed a noble forehead ; but most remarkable were his keen, flashing eyes. The guards always mentioned him as a political prisoner against whom a more than common crime was charged ; apparently he was a leader of uncommon sagacity and force. He never conversed with our men ; he would only answer questions briefly, always with urbanity. With Confederates he was scarcely more communicative. I have always been deeply interested to know his fate.

As we entered we were told that one of the houses had been assigned to the citizens, and that one we were prohibited from entering ; the other could be used by as many as could get into it. By close packing all our "squad" succeeded in being sheltered by it. As we had been bountifully supplied with provisions during the day, and needed only to have our names taken down by the provost marshal after our entrance, we quickly lay down, and, weary with the long, uncomfortable ride, were soon lost in sleep.

When we had been up two or three hours the following morning, a sergeant came into the prison and asked who was in command of our company, stating

that he was ready to issue rations to us, and desired our captain and two men to go with him to obtain them.

As we had no "captain," an impromptu election was at once held, and the writer was requested to act as a commissary sergeant for the balance of the men. Selecting two men to go with me, we walked down to one of the buildings used as a commissary department, and received two days' rations of meal and bacon. The quantity of meal per day was rather less than one and a half pints, and of bacon each man received a piece equal in size to the index and middle finger. As the meal was very coarse and filled with pieces of cobs and husks, and as frequently the bacon was "rusty" or wormy, I am safe in saying that there was no day when a man with an ordinary appetite would not only be able to eat his supply of food, but be hungry for another ration of equal amount. Salt was given to us in very small quantity, but no other food, no other article was added to our rations.

To each squad of ten men a common cast-iron kettle (in some cases with an iron cover) was issued in which to cook our food. In this kettle we browned our meal, to be used in making meal "coffee;" we also used it to boil our mush, bake our bread, fry our bacon, and make our "coffee."

The kettle was thus in almost constant use, to do all this for two messes of five each, twice daily. But



as we had nothing else to do, doubtless we could as well pass our time in waiting for that one kettle to come to our "turn" as in any other way.

The first day after we arrived in Meridian, I was called before the provost marshal to answer some questions concerning our little company. As he observed on his list that I was an Illinois soldier, he asked me from what portion of Illinois I came, and on my telling him, he mentioned that he had formerly lived in Sycamore, which was only twelve miles from my home. Afterward we became quite well acquainted, and from him I learned that he had gone to Mississippi several years before the war as a railroad contractor. His name was J. J. Fitzpatrick; by birth he was an Irishman. As soon as the war broke out he secured for himself the appointment of provost marshal of Meridian, and doubtless had made the office of some pecuniary benefit to himself. To me he was always pleasant, sometimes even "chatty," seemingly on account of having lived in a portion of Illinois in which I was acquainted. To all others he was harsh, vindictive, cruel. One of his peculiarities was that he always gave his orders for the punishment of prisoners with such a smile on his face as most men wear when performing an act that gives them pleasure, and such as is expected to please the recipient. His face at such times wore none of the lines of hatred. "Pud," our Iowa boy, after studying him carefully for a long

time, declared he was the man whom Byron had before him when he described his Corsair,

"As mild a mannered man  
As ever cut a throat or sunk a ship."

Additions were daily made to our numbers of men captured in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana, until we numbered nearly a hundred.

We had been in Meridian a day or two only when I with a young man named Grimes cast about for an opportunity to escape. Carefully looking about the prison and its surroundings, we determined to begin a tunnel, to complete which would require many nights, as work could only be performed during the night.

The mouth of the tunnel must, of necessity, begin in one of the houses, for there was no place outside, near the stockade, where we could commence without being discovered.

Hardly had we decided fully as to the proper course to pursue, when we were informed that on the morrow we would be taken away to another prison in Alabama. This made any attempt at escape from Meridian seemingly impossible.

## CHAPTER X.

PLANS FOR ESCAPE—SENT TO CAHABA—SEARCHED FOR VALUABLES—IN CASTLE MORGAN—"WHAT DO YOU HEAR ABOUT EXCHANGE?"

THE following day all soldiers in the prison were placed upon the train for Selma, and arrived there the same evening. Here we were placed in the third story of a brick building, on the corner of two principal streets.

As usual, we found other prisoners when we were placed in the guard-rooms, most of them being either Confederate deserters or persons guilty of some misdemeanor against the Confederacy. One of those confined was a doctor who had lived in Texas, and claimed that State as his home. By birth he was an Irishman, and his travels had been extended to many portions of the world. Whether he was in sympathy with the Confederacy or not was a question concerning which one could not be fully assured. He claimed to be a Confederate, but some words of his made me suspect his loyalty to that cause, and even believe that he was either a Southern Union man or a spy in the employ of a Northern general.

Another person whose acquaintance we cultivated was a conscript, kept there until he could be sent safely to the front. He was a strong Unionist, who had been brought from his home in Northern Alabama, where he said he had been hiding from the conscripting officers for many months. He told me there were many Union men in Northern Alabama, and that if we could once escape to that part of the State, we would be aided on our journey by most of the people who resided there.

Poor fellow ! he was as ignorant as a heathen, and his information was of the most meagre kind ; but there could be no doubting that his service to the Confederacy would be most unwillingly given.

As in Meridian, Grimes and I were constantly discussing the possibility of an escape, and in a short time agreed upon its details. The building in which we were confined was three stories high, our room being at the top. By the side of it was a store of two stories, and a window on the side of our building looked out over the roof of our neighbor. This window was closed by boards strongly nailed over it, and as an additional security against the opening of the window, a small room made of boards had been built on the side of the room where the closed window was, completely covering it in.

Our plan was to effect an entrance into the little board room, tear a board from the window, drop down



upon the neighboring roof, and reach the ground by the aid of a lightning-rod belonging to the building.

A guard paced back and forth upon the only side upon which escape was possible, but we learned that in rainy weather he sought shelter just around the corner of the building, making only an occasional visit to his "beat."

We effected an entrance into the little board room and loosened a board from the window; then, carefully concealing all evidence of having tampered with either, we waited for a favorable hour to assist us. Alas! it never came. We only remained in Selma in all three or four days, and not a single day after our scheme for escape was completed.

The food furnished us at Selma was more scanty than at Meridian, and the water was more scanty than the food. We had one small pail to bring water to a hundred men, and could only go for water when we could get a guard to go with us, which seemed to be quite a difficult matter to do. While getting our affairs in readiness—saving a portion of our crackers and bacon to supply us after we should escape, discussing the best course to follow to reach our lines—an officer came into our upstairs rooms and announced that a boat would be in from Montgomery during the afternoon, and on it all soldiers would be conveyed to Cahaba. We hoped some accident would postpone the arrival of the boat over

one night at least, for the prospect was that an escape from Cahaba must be much more difficult than from any place in which we had before been confined; but our prayers were of no avail, as the boat came in during the afternoon, and a little after dark we arrived at Cahaba, the prison destined to be our abiding place during the major portion of our captivity.

It was raining hard as we left the boat and marched through the village to the office of the commander of the prison. While waiting for our names to be called, and to be searched for anything of value, we were turned into an empty room to escape the rain. Hardly had we been in the room a minute when a friend called my attention to a window that had been closed by boards nailed over it.

Together we took hold of one of the boards, and were loosening it carefully, lest it should make any noise and betray our attempt. The lower end had been silently freed from its fastenings, when a nail broke with a loud noise, and at once a rebel guard came hastening to the spot. There was not time for either of us to get through the window before the guard was near us, so we crowded to another part of the room, and blamed our ill luck for the accident.

We waited in that vacant room but a short time before, "by squads," we were taken into the office of the commander of the prison to be searched. All prisoners who were taken to Cahaba were searched

for any valuables that might have escaped the thieves who had guarded them previously. If any was secreted and discovered by the searchers, it was confiscated. If it was handed over to the searching officer, we were promised that it should be given to us should we be exchanged, paroled, or taken to any other prison.

We knew that all, or nearly all, that we had dealt with before had no hesitation in taking anything from us that they could secure by quiet means, and not a few had no hesitation to resort to threats and violence; but we believed, from the fair promises made by the prison officers of Cahaba, that we might be dealing with honest men; and fearing lest what I had secreted upon my person might be discovered and confiscated, I handed to the searching officer all the cash I had upon my person (eleven dollars), and was passed along to the portion that had been searched. I did not, however, give up all my valuables. I had still secreted in the lining of my pants a gold pen and silver holder and a good jack-knife. The knife was of some use to me afterward, but the pen was stolen from me by some of the thieves of our own party.

Although the officers of the prison did not allow us to take into the prison any good knife, if we had been so fortunate as to have smuggled one into the pen, it was not usually taken from us afterward. I also kept a silk handkerchief, and this was retained

until the next year, when I sold it to a citizen at Selma for twelve dollars, Confederate money, and with the twelve dollars I bought two eggs at one dollar a piece and a loaf of bread at ten dollars; but of that anon.

When we were on the train between Okolona and Meridian, one of the prisoners was trading with one of the guards, offering one dollar in greenbacks for three in Confederate money. The trade had not been fully completed when the slave-hunter chanced to hear the proposed exchange. "Don't give three dollars of Confederate money for one dollar of the Lincoln scrip," said he; "it ain't worth it. General Early is now [July 17th to 20th, 1864] moving on to Washington, and within three months our men will hold that city, and Confederate money will be worth more than greenbacks." His words seemed to be accepted as true by the guards, so no exchange was made. But when we arrived at Cahaba, if any man had been so fortunate as to have kept his money and carried it into prison with him, he had no trouble in exchanging with guards at three and even four dollars for one. When we left Cahaba the next March, men who had greenbacks could obtain for them twenty, thirty, fifty, and even sixty dollars for one.

The policy of taking the valuables of prisoners was not always carried out by force; usually some excuse was given. "You might try to bribe the guards," or,



"You might buy fire-arms," or some other senseless and gauzy excuse was offered as a reason for the act; and the only reason why a few men had succeeded in keeping their money was that sometimes the dull, witless guards could find no good excuse for taking it.

Making a distinction between the Confederate soldiers who served at the front and the poor specimens of humanity who were our guards, there was no disputing the fact that our guards, as a rule, were not the intellectual equals of their prisoners. Material that was too poor to convert into soldiers for Lee and Johnson could be utilized in guarding prisoners.

The person who assured us that if we gave our valuables into the keeping of the Confederate officials they should be returned to us, and that if we did not do so they should be confiscated, was the then commander of the prison, Captain H. A. M. Henderson. From a very slight personal acquaintance, from the reports of others, and from his personal appearance, I am of the belief that, had Captain Henderson remained in command of the prison, the promise given to us would have been fully redeemed. His prepossessing manner was an assurance to many of our comrades of his honest intentions, and made them willing to give into his care whatever things of value they had heretofore concealed. But, unfortunately for us, Captain Henderson was shortly after promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, and assigned to duty as

Assistant Commissioner of Exchange, a position in which he had no control of the affairs or government of Castle Morgan. I was told that some of the men who turned over to the officials at Cahaba their money, watches, etc., received them back wholly or in part ; but when I called for what was due me at the time of my leaving there, I was coolly informed that the books showed nothing to my credit. I could only reply that the books should have done so if they did not.

After the official searching of the captives had been finished, we were taken to the prison, which has been described in a previous chapter.

Once inside the stockade and inner walls, many of the prisoners who had been there confined for several weeks crowded about us to ask "from what command we came," "where captured," "how was the war progressing," "was there any hope of exchange," etc. I answered many questions, asked a few, and selecting an unoccupied space of sandy earth, was soon fast asleep.

When the morning came, guards entered the prison and, causing all the inmates to stand in the southern end of the brick enclosure, a line of guards was formed through which we passed singly and were counted. Then we were allowed to pass out to the cook yard and begin our preparations for breakfast, the men being usually divided into messes of five.

## CHAPTER XI.

UNDER THE WATER-CLOSET AND OVER THE STOCKADE  
—A HARD DAY'S MARCH AHEAD OF US—WADING  
IN THE ALABAMA—DOWN TO BUSINESS.

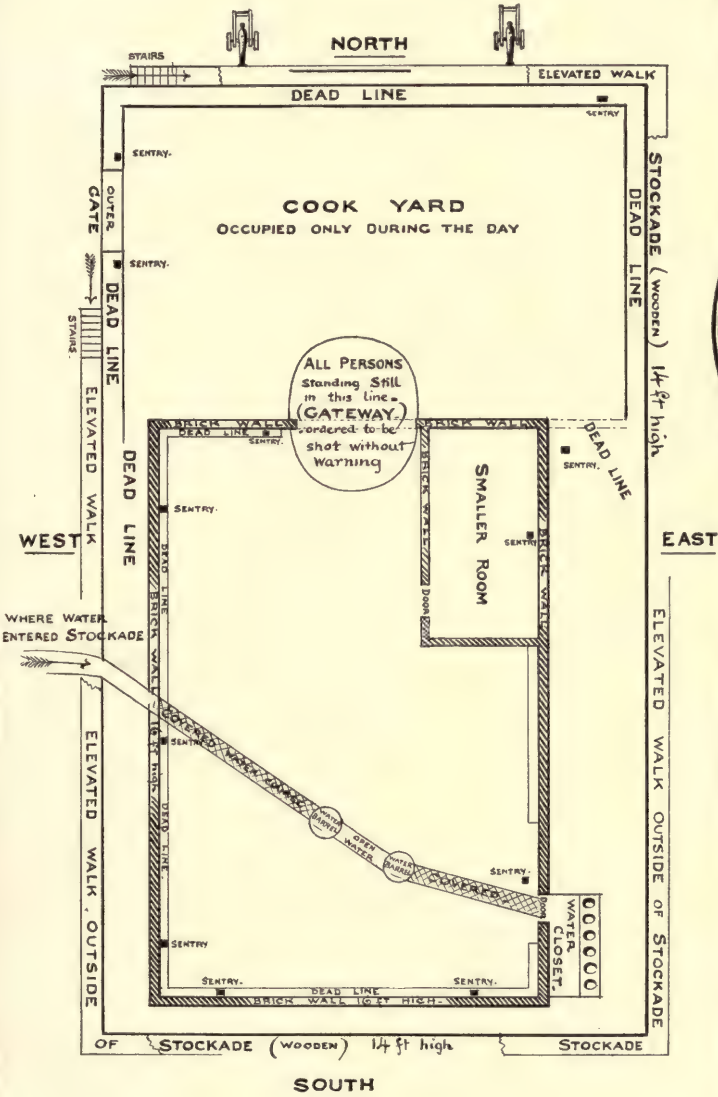
PREVIOUS to coming to Castle Morgan, I had become quite well acquainted with a number of my fellow-prisoners, and, as has been stated, we had often together discussed the chances for making our escape. Those with whom I had conversed most were E. A. Gere, a former citizen of Ohio, but now a member of the One Hundred and Seventeenth Illinois Regiment; Grimes, a member of the Fourth Missouri Cavalry; and D. E. McMillan (a nephew of General McMillan), a member of the Ninety-fifth Ohio Infantry, who, at the time of his capture, was acting as orderly for his uncle. Grimes had had a startling history, of which, in the course of time, I became possessed. Born in Virginia, a "poor white," uneducated, unselfish with friends, suspicious of strangers, under the control of a most violent temper and revengeful disposition if suffering from a wrong, real or fancied, he had enlisted in a Confederate regiment,

and served in it for several months in Virginia. There he had some difficulty with another Confederate soldier, and while he did not so state in plain words, he led me to infer that in an affray he had so injured the Confederate that death followed. Certain it is that the result of the affray was so serious that he sought personal safety in flight, and in due time entered the Union lines as a deserter, changed his name, and enlisted in an Ohio regiment belonging to the Army of the Potomac. Here again a similar occurrence drove him from the new service, and his next appearance upon the military stage was as a recruit for the Fourth Missouri Cavalry. When captured he had been a member of the latter regiment a few months only. The possibility of being recognized by one of the Confederates who might be our guards was an incubus that filled him with terror, for his fate in that event would certainly be death for desertion, if not for the act that led to it; while he was equally anxious to be away from Cahaba, as he had learned that a number of his Ohio regiment were among the prisoners, although they were to each other entire strangers. The quality that commended Grimes as a companion in a contemplated escape was his unchanging, earnest determination to secure his freedom. Gere was a restless spirit, who chafed under the restraint of prison life, and was always on the alert for any information that might be of value if we should succeed in any attempt



to regain our freedom. An acquaintance with him confirmed a first impression, that he would be an excellent comrade, as he possessed courage, vigilance, prudence, an inflexible determination to regain his freedom, and a tough, wiry body that would enable him to endure the hardships inevitable to any fugitive in his long, weary route through a land filled with sleepless enemies. McMillan was a companionable boy of much suavity, intelligence, and honesty, but, as he was quite young, he had hardly the self-reliance that doubtless a few more years would have given him. We learned that guards were always placed between the brick walls and the stockade on all sides during the night, but none were there in the daytime. We also were informed that explosive obstructions (torpedoes) were placed around the outside of the prison, and deep enough in the earth to be in the course of any tunnel. This was stated upon what seemed good authority, and was said to have been done a year before, after the escape of seven prisoners by tunnel. To escape by tunnelling also seemed quite impossible, for the reason that in digging a vast amount of earth must be disposed of, and there was no place for such disposition with the surroundings of the prison. Any quantity of earth poured into the water-closet would at once be discovered, and to place it out upon the ground among our men was to advertise the tunnel to all in the prison, and that

DIAGRAM OF CAHABA PRISON.





would be fatal to any scheme; for there were always some among our men who would at any time betray such a secret for a peck of sweet potatoes. This admission seems a severe reflection upon the honor of Union soldiers, and ascribes to them a venality to admit which is mortifying; but it must be remembered that there were in our ranks not a few who had been the dregs of our large cities and the scum of the nation—men who had enlisted for the bounty paid by some towns, and who had no more of heart or sentiment in regard to the principles of the North than the swine with which they had been reared. A sentry was placed at the northeast corner of the brick wall, and one was also placed at the door of the water-closet (see diagram). The duty of the first was to watch the space between the brick wall and stockade; the second, to observe all who might pass into the water-closet, and see that no one escaped through that possible avenue. As no guard was placed between the brick wall and the stockade on the south side in the daytime, it offered one chance of escape that no other direction did. So, after much consultation, we decided upon the following scheme: to have some of the men engage the attention of the guards at the two places named, while we should get under the floor of the water-closet and pass out into the space between the inner or brick wall and stockade, by crawling through the trough or open sewer which car-



ried the water and fæces. Once between the brick wall and stockade we were to quickly climb over the latter, which at that point was composed of small poles four to six inches in diameter, and these placed a few inches apart, that the sewer water might flow through. We had been in Castle Morgan only five days when the favorable moment was deemed at hand. On July 31st we had fully decided upon the course we would pursue. That night a heavy shower occurred, and among other of its good deeds, it gullied the ground at the entrance to the water-closet. Inside the brick wall, when this old cotton shed was first built, the ground had been raised to a higher plane than the ground under the floor of the water-closet, and the shower had washed away enough of the earth to admit of the passage of a man's body through the gully; so that if the guard's attention could be earnestly attracted for a few minutes, it would be very easy to slip through the providential opening and crawl under the floor of the water-closet. Three of us—Grimes, Gere, and myself—had fully determined to risk our fortunes on the venture. McMillan was almost persuaded, but at length concluded the deed would be too dangerous; but as he had on a pair of gray pants, which he had been compelled to receive in a "swap" with some Confederate, he gladly exchanged with me. The others had taken the same precaution, so that to a stranger we could, if not too closely inspected,

easily pass for Confederate soldiers. I had on my hat one of the blue and gold hat-bands worn quite frequently by the officers of our army, but which were very rarely seen in the possession either of the Confederate soldiers or officers. If one thing more than another was pleasing to the eyes of the Confederate guard, it was some such gewgaw as that band. Let others explain it as they may, the fact was patent to all who were brought in contact with them. This band I gave to one of our men, who at an appointed signal was to enter into negotiations for its sale with the guard at the water-closet. A fancy knife was at the same time to be handed to the guard outside, at the northeast corner of the shed, and active, earnest negotiations were to be continued, until it was certain that we were outside of the stockade, or discovered in the attempt. We had eaten our breakfast of meal "pone," a new relief of guards had been posted, and it was certain no change of guards would be made in the next hour, when we bade good-by to the few friends who were acquainted with our desperate proposition, and received their earnest good wishes. Men were constantly entering and coming out of the water-closet when we passed in. Casting a glance at the guard, and noting that he was deeply occupied in bargaining for the band, Gere, reluctant to attempt the passage through the opening so near to the feet of the guard, attempted to crowd himself through the "seat" of the

closet ; it had, however, been made too small to admit of the passage of the body of any ordinary sized man. He was stuck fast ; but both of us, catching hold of him, he was pulled back in a second. Our only hope was to pass through the opening washed out by the rain of the previous night. This was within two feet of where the guard was standing, and should he chance to look down while either of us might be crawling through the "gully," he could not fail to observe us. It was but the work of a second for Grimes to glide as noiselessly as a cat to the opening, to glance eagerly at the guard, to place his feet in the opening, to glide under the floor on which Gere and I were standing. Gere seemed for a moment dazed at his failure to pass through the "seat," and while he was standing in suspense I repeated the act of Grimes, and was followed immediately by Gere. We waited a moment to listen if our action had been observed ; then one after another laid down in the trough, half filled with running water, and crawling through its length, we were outside the water-closet. The first and most formidable obstacle had been overcome. Peeping through the crack of the boards between us and the nearest guard, we saw he was still intent upon his negotiations. A glance to the other guard showed that the friend who was to draw away his attention was most faithful to the duty assigned him ; then, with nervous hands, one seized the poles that formed the stockade, and with

the strength of an athlete, the quickness of a sprite, was over the side in a minute, and immediately followed by the other two. When we jumped to the ground we observed a negro a few rods away looking at us; but we were each dressed in gray, and sauntered along leisurely through the portion of town nearest the prison. I have no doubt he mistook us for Confederate soldiers off duty, who had scaled the stockade at that point rather than go to the front gate for exit. A few blocks away we noticed Confederate soldiers, and believed they must have seen us jumping from the stockade; but if they had noticed the movement, the very boldness of the act, the improbability of "Yankee" prisoners escaping from so strong a prison in broad daylight, disarmed all suspicion, and made our dare-devil exploit the easiest possible method of escape. A far different story must have been told—if either of us had lived to tell it—had either of the guards observed our movements. A few weeks after a prisoner named Natty, a member of a loyal Louisiana battery, succeeded in getting between the water-closet and the stockade without looking back to see whether he was observed. He stood for a moment looking at the stockade, and just then put up his hand to scratch his ear, when "bang" went the gun of the guard within the water-closet, and a bullet clipped off the end of his finger that had been extended to the ear. The guard at the door of the water-closet had



spied him through the cracks, and placing the muzzle of his rifle to the crack, had fired, intending to drive a bullet through his brain ; but the thick plank deflected the leaden missile three inches and saved his life. Walking leisurely along through a corner of the town, we shortly came to the bank of the Alabama River, and along its side we strolled for a few rods ; then we entered the water. Our object was to leave no track on the ground that could be followed by the hounds, which we knew would be placed upon our trail, if it could be found, when our flight became known. For nearly half a mile we waded in the water ; then, coming to a steep bank where some strong wild vines hung from a tree and down the sides of the bank, we pulled ourselves up some twelve or fifteen feet, and found ourselves on the edge of a rather shapely wooded grove. Crossing this, we came to the main road, but feared to cross it, lest we might be seen, as we were still in sight of the town. A short distance away we observed a culvert extending across the road sufficiently large to admit of our crawling through it ; so by creeping carefully from the grove to the road and through the culvert we gained another wood on the west side of the road, and started briskly forward toward the west.

## CHAPTER XII.

AN UNWELCOME SPECTATOR—CLIMBING TREES TO ESCAPE FROM HOUNDS—A FALSE ALARM—AN INVOLUNTARY BATH—SEEKING LODGINGS—SWIMMING THE CREEK—THE NEGRO OVERSEER—"YOU—U," "YOU—U."

OUR intention was to go west until we came to the Tombigbee River, and find a boat with which we could pass down the Tombigbee to the vicinity of Mobile, to travel thence across the country east to Pensacola, Fla. This seemed the most feasible route for several reasons. We believed that here would be less watch kept upon the Tombigbee for runaways, and there would be less likelihood of meeting boats upon it than upon the Alabama. It would allow us to travel with much more ease than upon the land, and as there was no organized Rebel army in that direction, we thought that there would be much less prospect of meeting with those who would take us back into captivity. Alas, "the best laid plans of men and mice" are often thwarted! We had frequently heard of the ease with which the dogs of the South

would trail a fleeing fugitive, and were at a loss how to obliterate our tracks ; but Grimes had lived in the South, was born there, and he told us that fugitives sometimes rubbed the fresh fæces of animals upon their shoes or feet ; and, passing where a cow had quite recently passed we adopted his suggestion and repeated it several times during the day. Five or six miles on our road (we travelled always in the woods and through fields) we found it necessary to cross the main highway, and, listening for a moment and hearing no sound, we climbed over the fence. Just then a negro driving a span of mules moved into the road from an untravelled path near by. He had stopped just before we came to the spot, had taken down a pair of bars, and was waiting as we came up, having heard our steps and conversation. When we climbed over the fence he drove forward and we were within ten rods of him. Fearing that we would arouse his suspicions, should we pass on without speaking to him, we approached him and asked several questions, the direction to Cahaba being one of them. We stated to him that we were Confederate soldiers, and expressed surprise that we had become turned around in the forest, and started off as if to go to the last place on earth we ever wanted to see again—Cahaba. I have always felt that the negro strongly suspected our true character, and was friendly to us on that account. We changed our course as soon as

we were out of his sight, resumed the journey to the west, and for the next two or three hours often stopped and listened for any unwelcome sound of pursuing hounds. No sound came, however, and after a few hours we breathed freer. In the afternoon we passed near several parties of negroes, but were always fortunate in passing unobserved, until just before nightfall, in crossing a crooked road, we looked back, and saw, less than a quarter of a mile away, a team and several slaves, but it was quite probable they did not observe us. We continued our flight till into the evening, when a very heavy shower compelled us for an hour or more to seek the shelter of a protecting tree. During the day we kept the person in advance who could walk the fastest, and at the same time look out for any source of danger. As we were poorly shod, looking to the right, left and front, our leader would often hurt his foot, or scratch himself upon the thorns and briers, so to nurse his injuries he would be put in the rear for a time where he could more carefully watch his steps. Twice during the day we heard hounds barking, and once they came so near that we climbed trees to prevent their tearing us should they prove to be upon our tracks. They were doubtless stray hounds that had gone on a hunt on their own account, some animal having crossed their path. During the day we ate some raw green corn, that at that time was just. "in the milk." It was not



very palatable, nor of very much nutritive value, but it served to lessen our hunger. Shortly before midnight we started forward again. The rain had ceased falling and we hoped to make a good number of miles before daybreak, and intended to sleep during the succeeding day. Although there was no rain falling the sky was inky black, and it was impossible to see a rod ahead. We kept falling into water-holes and gullies, and all of us were soaking wet. The last dousing I received was by falling into a hole where a tree had been blown over, and its roots had excavated a pit four or five feet deep. This was nearly filled with water, and on its edge I tripped over an unobserved root and fell headlong into the little pool. That settled the question for me, and the other two were willing to receive my testimony regarding the unpleasant sensation of the plunge without question, and accept my bath as an omen to seek lodgings until daylight. We found a piece of ground not covered with water, pulled weeds from the earth, tore bark from a decaying tree, laid them so that they should be under our hips and shoulders when lying down, then all lay down as close together as possible, shivering much and sleeping little until the first blush of red appeared in the east. We were anxious lest we might be near a plantation, so we dared not remain on the ground after it began to grow light, knowing that the "hands" (negroes) were compelled to rise early,

and fearing we might be seen and betrayed. It would be hard to find, outside of a hospital for incurable rheumatic patients, three more bent and stiffened cripples than we were on attempting to walk away from that bed of bark and damp weeds. For a mile my body was stooped almost to a right angle with my legs, while Gere and Grimes declared that their backs were out of joint; but we soon entered a wood, and, getting warmer as the sun came above the horizon, in another hour we were as supple as ever. How great the recuperative power of youth! In the early morning we passed a peach-tree on the border of a plantation and secured a few small peaches, not of a fair quality had they been ripe, and they were several days short of being so. We heard human voices several times during the morning, but always avoided being seen. During the forenoon we came to a creek that had been swollen by the rain to a river six or eight rods wide, and much too deep to be forded. Neither of my companions could swim, so we undressed, and tied our clothes securely into bundles. I swam to the middle of the river, where they threw the bundles to me, and I transported them the balance of the way, and deposited them upon the opposite shore. Then one got a rail to support himself with, and I swam him across, clinging to it. The other could swim with a rail without help. We spent half an hour on the farther bank wringing the water

from our clothes, and drying them in the sun, and started on. A few miles beyond we came to a large cornfield, and had passed into it fifteen or twenty rods, when we heard field hands right ahead of us. These we dared not meet, so returned to the woods, and passed around the field, or rather started to do so, when Gere noticed a negro standing a short distance ahead of us apparently observing us closely. To have turned away would have been suspicious, so we approached him and inquired the way to the main road, which we already knew was half a mile to our left. The negro was evidently rather above his class, and, as it afterward proved, was the overseer of the gang in the field. He was very obsequious, strongly reminding one of a fawning cur, so servile was he in his anxiety to seem friendly. When he had replied to our questions in regard to the road inquired for, he said: "I'se mighty sorry I ain't got some millions (water-melons) here fo' ye; I'd be powerful glad to gie yo' som', and if you'll jes stop here till I done fetch som', I'll bring ye som'." We thanked him, adding that we were rebel soldiers who had left our command and were going to visit some friends a few miles ahead and did not wish to lose any time.

His servile, fawning manner made Grimes suspicious of him, and when we had gone far enough to be out of his hearing, Grimes wanted us to go back and compel him to go with us until dark, or tie him to a

tree and leave him gagged. Indeed, I believe he would sooner have had him killed than to let him do as he might ; but Gere and I had less fear of his betraying us, and, though we took no formal ballot, we decided to leave him unmolested. So long as we were in sight of him we continued in the same direction as when discovered ; then, turning at a sharp angle, we entered the cornfield again, and travelled fast for an hour. One after another field had been passed, and the fear of pursuit had nearly gone from our minds, leaving us without its stimulus. During the day Grimes's boots had so galled his feet they became worse than useless, and, cutting the tops of them into strings and sandals, he was making them perform duty in that manner. Gere and I were but little better off, although our boots were still retained upon our feet. We were all as weary as we could be and drag ourselves along. Faint from want of food and sleep, we had determined to go only to the first place where we could lie down and sleep in safety. Had no new experience come to us, I am sure we could not have dragged ourselves along another mile. Three men more exhausted I never saw, and that we could move faster than a walk I would have considered an impossibility. Just as we had nearly passed through a large field of corn, Gere halted and listened ; he said he could hear the cry of hounds. A very faint "you," "you," could occasionally be heard



that brought a feeling of uneasiness to us ; but after listening a moment, the sound grew fainter, and we resumed our weary march. Again the soft wind brought the dreaded sound nearer and clearer, and again we stopped and listened, until it ceased in the distance. What suspense ! Hardly had we once more started forward when, nearer, louder, more malignant and venomous, came that hellish "you," "you." Ah ! it required no imagination then to decide the question. We looked at each other, and all saw faces pale with fear and sickening despair. For a moment I almost fainted. The sound had now come so near that we could plainly distinguish the yelp of many dogs. As our trail grew more fresh, their cries sounded sharper. 'Tis said the hunter can tell from the cry of the hound whether a trail is fresh or old. A sickening, qualmish sensation ran over us, and the dullest imagination could see their hungry forms leaping forward, their heads bent to the earth, their white teeth and frothing mouths hungry to tear our flesh from the living body or bury their fangs in our throats. We were faint, but only for a moment ; then, with the speed of frightened wild deer, we ran from the yelping, howling, maddened pack that just then burst into view behind us.

## CHAPTER XIII.

RUNNING FROM THE DOGS—RECAPTURED—GARRULOUS  
OLD HATCHER—IDENTIFIED—THE INSTINCT OF  
FIENDS POSSESSED BY THE HOUNDS—RETURNED  
TO CAHABA.

A MOMENT before we were so weary that a dragging gait was the limit of possibility; a moment after we were flying with the speed and spirit of the frightened roe. We had not far to go ere we came to the edge of the field, and at that point was a corral for the purpose of confining mules. Usually the fences provided for such use were much higher than ordinary fences, but this was certainly one of the highest I ever saw. Up this we climbed, just as the pack closed the distance between us. A short distance behind we heard the shouts of men coming on horseback. So high was the fence that the dogs did not attempt to reach us by jumping, though two or three savage fellows came directly beneath us and, placing their fore-feet high on the fence, whined and growled and whined again in mingled disappointment and anticipation. The pack was composed of two

bloodhounds and several "catch dogs"—a cross of the hound and bull-dog, bred for the purpose of combining ferocity and resolution, a cruel, relentless brute; and woe betide the human prey that should fall into its power! Sitting there looking down into those red mouths looking back, waiting for creatures wearing the forms of men, carrying, it seemed to us then, the souls of devils, life hardly seemed worth the trouble of its living. A moment later one of our pursuers, a man past middle age, came into view, carrying a shot-gun or rifle. As soon as he saw us under the guard of the dogs, he shouted to his companion that we were caught. Covering us with his gun, he demanded to know if we were armed. We told him we were not. "Have you any pistols?" he asked again. "No." "Then come down from that fence and tell me who you are. Did you come from Cahaba?" By this time his companion had come up. I had learned the names of many men in one company of provost guards; had memorized the names of the company, regimental, brigade, and division commanders, and had hoped that, in case of capture, we could pretend to be Confederate soldiers, and at least be treated as men absent without leave, trusting that we might have a little better chance of escaping that way than as prisoners from Cahaba; and I had begun to tell them that tale, when Grimes, in reply to their question as to whether we had come from Cahaba, replied in the

affirmative. That put a full and irrevocable quietus upon my story. It was probably as well that Grimes answered, as our dialect and a careful cross-questioning would have almost certainly betrayed us. Seeing that we were unarmed, they came near and demanded us to come down from the fence. We told them we would as soon as we dared, but that we were fearful of the savage dogs beneath us. The men were so excited for a short time that they paid no attention to our request; but after telling them again we had no intention than doing other than their commands, but that we did not wish to be bitten by the brutes, one of the men came up and drove them away. The savage creatures disliked being cheated of their prey, and to silence them it was necessary to use the boot and whip without stint. After they had been reproved, we descended from the fence, and along with our captors started back over the weary way that led to the grave of our hopes.

Hounds trained to track human beings seem to possess the intelligence and instinct of fiends. Men who have observed them say that from a well-trained pack it is almost an impossibility to escape. Touch the limb of a twig in your flight, and so keen is their scent that the limb is a guide-post for hours after. Pass near a fence, dry or moist, and enough of odor from a person will attach to it that it shall be like trees blazed by woodmen. Ford the stream, they will follow and take up



your track again on the other side. Enter the running current and travel in its bed for a mile, the pack will divide in four parties, two upon the farther and two upon the nearer shore; one of each will pass up and down the bank, and when the trail is again found, with their ringing bark the other parties will be recalled, and all will unite to chase fugitives; and cunning indeed must be the wretched black or white who would escape from them by stratagem. A mile or two back we stopped at the house of a planter to get a drink, and as we were so fatigued from our hardships and hunger, we ventured to ask for some food. We had really eaten but one small meal in forty-eight hours. The food sent out—stewed “nigger peas” and cold corn bread—was to us most palatable, and after resting for half an hour, we were much refreshed and started back with our three captors, a third person having come up after we had started back. All were well armed and mounted. One was chief spokesman; the names of two were Morgan and Hatcher—the third one’s name I do not remember. Hatcher was quite talkative, and as foolish and insane as regards the powers of the people of the South as any old dunce one could meet in a day’s ride. He told us the oft-repeated story that soldiers of the North were not as valiant as those of the South; that we could never—no, never—conquer the South; that one Southern man was more than a match for two Northern men; that the

South had a great advantage by being on the defensive, and by knowing the country so well; that no people like those of the South had ever been defeated when they attempted to gain their liberty. "Why," said he, "you can't even begin to ride like our men." Now if there was one thing that I could do it was to ride well, and so I informed him. "Ah! but not a Yankee. You came from Illinois, and Illinois people are not Yankees; they are like our people. When our independence is acknowledged by the North, Illinois will join us; but the South will never admit into the Confederacy another Northern State; Ohio is as bad as Massachusetts." I took considerable delight in replying that I could ride a horse as well as he, and that so far as my not being a Yankee was concerned, I was born in New England, and had lived there until less than a year before the war began, and that I left Illinois shortly after the commencement of the war; if I was not a Yankee, I did not know who was; that I had seen quite a number of battles, and had never had any reason to think the Northern soldiers, whether from Massachusetts or Minnesota, were less brave or less efficient than those from Alabama or South Carolina; that I had seen battles that he had not; that if the opinion of either of us should receive consideration, mine certainly ought to be as well founded as his. I noticed that my assertions were not conducive to good-humor on his part, so, as a matter of policy, I

admitted many of his statements, and fared the better therefor. The feeling in the South toward Illinois was quite frequently the same as he expressed, and the reader will note at a later period a practical illustration was given in my treatment. A hatred was often manifested toward the troops from New England that was not shown toward those of the West, especially those from Illinois. Many times was I treated with comparative civility when men from Ohio or Massachusetts were abused. But above all they did, they hated the Union men from the border States of Missouri and Kentucky. Six or seven miles from where we were captured we stopped for the night, at the plantation of Hatcher. There we learned of the black rascal who had given information concerning us. He was the overseer of the field hands of Hatcher's—the same fawning, crawling cur who had met us in the wood by the cornfield. He had intended, when he asked us to wait while he went for melons for us, to keep us at that point until he could inform his master of our presence. When we had thanked him for his imputed kindness and moved forward, he hastened to the "big house" and told Hatcher of his discovery, stating that we were Yankees, for we did not speak the dialect of Southern men. At once the dogs were taken to the place in the woods where we had been last seen, had lost some little time before getting on the right trail, and followed us to the place of our capture, a distance,

they informed us, of six or seven miles. The accursed slave was called in, and we were shown to him for identification. He grinned and wiggled, that he had pleased his master so well; but we hoped beneath his black skin was an accusing conscience that should fill his days with remorse and his nights with ever-recurring dreams of tireless hounds, with bloody and frothing mouths, pursuing him and his children fugitives. For his sake it is a pity that slavery does not still exist; but doubtless he was a tyrant to the abject souls under his dominion. Before going to sleep we were given a fair amount of food and told that a guard would be placed over us for the night; that if we attempted to escape it would do us no good, for the attempt would be fruitless, and we would fare the worse for it. True, escape in our condition was almost an impossibility. We were sore and stiff in every limb; our feet were galled and blistered. Grimes was barefoot, and the other two were nearly so. It was a hard fate to submit to, but there was no alternative. When morning came we were again fed, and started early on our road to Cahaba. The distance was such that it would have taken at least all day for us to walk it—perhaps two days, lame and sore as we were; so, as a matter of economy of time, a wagon was hitched to a span of brisk mules, and, followed by an armed guard, we left the plantation, wishing in our hearts that it might meet with the fate of Sodom before another month should pass by. Quite



late in the afternoon we were driven into Cahaba, and before the provost marshal's office. On dismounting, the adjutant, Loader, with whom I had already formed some acquaintance, took me to the back part of the room, and wanted to know where we escaped, and how. I argued with him that it was a prisoner's privilege to escape if he could, and was willing to take such desperate chances; that while I could not object to the guard taking all possible precautions against the loss of prisoners, they certainly could not expect us to furnish evidence detrimental to ourselves. My reasons for not giving the information he sought were received pleasantly, for Loader was quite an agreeable man to deal with, and after a few commonplace remarks all were sent to prison. Ah! that return to Castle Morgan was not like the return of soldiers to their homes in the North at the end of the war. Our old comrades met us with regret that we should have been recaptured, and by the guards we were marked as half criminals, who should be guarded with vigilance, and whose acts of insubordination in the future should be summarily dealt with. Here my Illinois home saved me from a punishment that was meted out to the others. Grimes, the hated Missourian, deemed a traitor to his State, was taken out the next day and ironed. Two links, each about one foot long, united by a short link, and at their outer extremity attached to thick iron bands for encircling the ankles, were riveted about his

limbs. During the process of riveting he was compelled to stand upon an anvil. The workmanship was coarse and rough, and poor Grimes's ankles were soon galled to the bone. Gere's crime was less. He was not a Missourian, but the prison officials had learned that he had been an Ohioan. He was compelled to do some work, and for a specified time was sentenced to stand on one foot, the other foot raised and placed on a slender stick of pine. Fortunate I was from Illinois, the only State in the North that boasting, garrulous old Hatcher would have been glad to receive into his dear Confederacy. No sentence was pronounced against me, though I was never to pass outside the gate, as many did, to gather wood; and whenever I entered the water-closet was narrowly watched by the guard on duty there. From our comrades who had watched our escape we learned the story of its discovery. The guard at the water-closet was held in conversation as long as possible, and the trade at length completed, when he resumed his duties. His eyes soon noted that the opening through which we crawled presented a different appearance. The edges of the opening, instead of being sharp, had been rounded by our bodies dragged over them. He observed this change carefully for a time, then called the officers of the guard. The question was still in doubt, but was settled by calling the roll of prisoners, when three were found missing—the commissary and two men from our company.

## CHAPTER XIV.

CASTLE MORGAN UNKNOWN—REASONS FOR ITS RETIRED POSITION IN HISTORY AND TRADITION—IN MANY PARTICULARS THE WORST PRISON IN THE CONFEDERACY—COMPARED WITH ANDERSONVILLE.

OUR stay in Castle Morgan, previous to our escape, had been so brief that but a slight acquaintance was formed with other inmates, with guards, officers, and the details and environments of the place. On entering a second time we were aware that the one weak place in the whole prison by which we had escaped was thoroughly strengthened—that the possibility of freedom through that avenue was forever gone; and the future held out no hope of release save with the termination of the war. Incidentally, we mention here that, after our escape, there is no reliable record of the escape of any man from Cahaba except one; and he, after several days, was recaptured. It was the most strongly guarded place of confinement in the South. It is proper here to give a general consideration to the position that Castle Morgan should occupy in the history of the Rebellion before entering into

its details. As a depot for Federal prisoners, Castle Morgan is almost unknown to history and in tradition. This statement is surprising, when one becomes aware that it was one of the large prisons of the South (it contained two and one half times as many prisoners as Libby); that it was by far the most crowded prison of the Confederacy; that while its inmates endured nearly all the rigors of other prisons, in some of its particulars their hardships and sufferings far exceeded those known in any prison, North or South; that half of those confined there during the winter of 1864-65, as a result of being compelled to stand knee-deep in cold water for nearly forty-eight hours, contracted serious illness; and connected with its memory the crowning horror, to all that had preceded, one third of all those paroled there from just before the close of the war lost their lives in an hour. There are several reasons for this non-acquaintance by the public with the place under consideration. First, because it became a large prison late in the war. Minor engagements in 1861 have ever held a more prominent place in history and in the memory of our people than battles of much greater magnitude in 1864. There were hundreds of men killed in 1863 and 1864 who were men of more ability and more local prominence than Ellsworth, yet the name of the colonel who died in Alexandria in 1861 will be handed down in history, and is known to all the men of his time, while the



men we suggest, who lost their lives in 1864, were unknown beyond their own circle of acquaintances, and their names will never be known beyond the present generation. The name of Libby Prison became familiar over the English-speaking world in 1861, and has continued so since ; yet had it never been used as a place of confinement until 1864, it would have been a stranger in the history of the Rebellion. The first impressions upon our sense of taste or smell or sight are strongest, and impressions of the same character, oft repeated, become almost imperceptible. This law holds true with impressions upon our memory and observation, and this fact explains in part the lack of prominence attaching to the name of Cahaba. Another reason for the retired position in history of this place is, that no attempt was ever made by our forces (on account of its inaccessible position) to release its inmates. Such attempts were made for the release of the men confined at Richmond and Andersonville and Macon, and other places. Stoneman's raid in Georgia was inaugurated largely for such a purpose, and Dahlgren lost his valued life in a similar attempt. Another reason was the small number of men that survived the experiences of Cahaba more than a few months after the war. Comparing Cahaba with Andersonville, one of the best-known prisons in the South, we note that Andersonville contained during the fall of 1864 over thirty thousand inmates,

Cahaba three thousand ; so the experiences of ten men are given from the former place to one from the latter, if equal percentages of each had survived.

But a very much larger percentage of those who left Cahaba died within the Union lines than of those who left the great Georgia pen. These are some of the reasons that a public well versed in the general history of the Civil War is unacquainted with the Alabama place of confinement, and why some who learned of the existence of such a place formed an estimate of it so incorrect. A few persons to whom the name of Castle Morgan was not entirely unknown had obtained the impression, from having heard so little in regard to it, that the place was one fairly desirable in which to be confined—at least was preferable to the dangers incident to soldier life at the front. Soon after the war closed, Congress appointed a commission to investigate the treatment of prisoners in the different prisons of the South ; and among the statements made to this committee, I noticed the opinion of one, that this prison was a fairly respectable place. A very mild reply to that assertion would be, that such an opinion was at variance with the express sentiment of all who had been confined there for any length of time, *especially during the last few months of its use* as a place of confinement. If a canvass were made of the opinions of those who regard themselves as fairly informed

upon the subject of Confederate prisons, I doubt not a large majority would decide that Camp Sumter, at Andersonville, Ga., was, in their opinion, and in popular estimation, the worst prison in the South, and, following closely after that, in unpleasant memory, would come Libby, Belle Isle, Florence, Millen, and Salisbury. Cahaba might not be remembered, or, if assigned a place in the hated list, would, perhaps, be accompanied by a note stating, "this place was an exception to the usual rule regarding prisons." Taking Andersonville as the reputed worst example of its class, we can by comparison convey a more just idea of Castle Morgan. More of misery could be seen in a visit to Andersonville than to its Alabama companion, because the first prison contained ten times more inmates, and because many of those who were confined in Andersonville had been captives for a much longer time than the oldest prisoners at Cahaba. Yet I make no assertion exceeding the bounds of reason in stating that if Castle Morgan had been continued as a military prison, *unchanged from its status through the winter of 1864-5*, for a period of six months longer, the percentage of its death-rate would have far exceeded every other prison in the South, and could only have found an historical analogue in the "Black Hole" of Calcutta. In Andersonville, if a prisoner were so fortunate as to obtain possession of an axe, he was allowed to retain it and

use it. In Cahaba, to possess an axe was a penal crime, and any man upon whom such a crime was fastened suffered severely for his temerity. The only reason I ever heard given for our not having axes supplied to us, was that they could be made, in case of an insurrection, an instrument of offence and defence. The same reasoning would have debarred us the use of skillet or wood. I never happened to be an eye-witness to the punishment inflicted upon a prisoner for having in his possession an axe, but was told that the punishment consisted in being put upon the "ladder," a means of discipline adopted by the Confederates, which is described elsewhere. In Andersonville prisoners were permitted to dig holes in the ground, and if they could obtain anything to cover their holes, had some shelter from the rain and at night when sleeping. A portion of the sleeping-ground at Castle Morgan was covered with a leaky roof, but a large space was open, and while those who lived and slept beneath the old roof were poorly protected, certain it is that those who slept in that part of the yard covered only by the sky were not allowed to dig "dugouts." But if they had been allowed to do so, there was no possible way by which they could have covered them. For a long time I slept where every rain soaked the ground, and where it was best often to sit up during a rain than to lie down. A smaller amount of rain falls upon a man



sitting than when extended at full length upon the earth. At Andersonville, men could sleep upon the ground where during the day the little mess fire had been built, and to which it had imparted a little of its genial warmth. To be sure the spot was small, and only a small portion of one person could be warmed by it, but, small as this boon was, its benefits were unknown to the hapless inmates of Cahaba. At Castle Morgan all fires were built in the cook-yard, and at sundown every prisoner passed through the gate into the sleeping-yard, where no fire was ever permitted after April, 1864. At Andersonville, while the water of the creek was wretched, during the summer of 1864 a miraculous spring burst forth from the hill-side within the prison, and thereafter an abundance of sweet pure water was supplied to all. At Castle Morgan the water that came into the prison was warm and sulphurous and nauseating, and if the statement of the Confederate surgeon, R. M. Whitfield, who was in charge of the prison, be given any credence, the sulphurous taste served only as a disguise to more unwholesome and more nauseating impurities. Not only at Andersonville, but at every other prison in the South, a larger space was allowed to each man than was given at Cahaba. A reference to the relative amount of space furnished to captives in several different prisons of the South reveals the following facts, which, for the purpose of giving a clearer

idea of their crowded condition, we compare with the space allotted to United States soldiers, by the "Army Regulations." In the United States Army Regulations it is ordered that in posts located south of the thirty-eighth degree of north latitude, each regimental mess of six men shall be allowed two hundred and fifty-six square feet of space, thus giving to each man an area of five and a quarter by eight feet, or forty-two square feet. This is simply for sleeping, storage of clothing, bedding and arms, the soldier taking exercise in the open air. Army experience and skilled medical advice both determine that this amount of space is absolutely needed for men in quarters. Andersonville, when most densely crowded, had a gross area of a little more than thirty acres. Deduct from this the creek and swampy lands on either side of it, and a dead line around the whole prison, and twenty-three acres remain. The largest number of prisoners any one day was on August 8th, 1864, when the whole number was thirty-three thousand one hundred and fourteen. This would give to each man a little more than thirty square feet of surface. At Florence fifteen acres were allotted to fifteen thousand men, which would give to each about forty-two square feet. Salisbury confined ten thousand men upon five acres, giving twenty-one square feet to each man. The well-known Libby Prison held twelve hundred men upon twenty-four

thousand square feet of floor; this permitted each man twenty square feet of floor. Castle Morgan, measured outside of the brick wall, was one hundred and sixteen feet by one hundred and ninety-three feet. Deducting the thickness of the wall, one foot on each side, the "dead line," five feet wide all around the inside of the prison, the commissary or guard-room, the inner brick wall, and the watercourse, would leave a net area of about one hundred and ten by one hundred and sixty-four feet, or six square feet per man for each of the three thousand men. The following tabular statement places the above facts in a more condensed form :

|                                           | Space allotted one man. |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| U. S. Army posts south of 38° N. Lat..... | 42 sq. ft.              |
| Andersonville .....                       | 30 " "                  |
| Salisbury.....                            | 21 " "                  |
| Libby Prison.....                         | 20 " "                  |
| Castle Morgan.....                        | 6 " "                   |

Castle Morgan, then, not including its cook-yard, gave to each occupant one fifth of the space allotted to each prisoner at Andersonville, and including the cook-yard, from which all prisoners were excluded one half of each twenty-four hours, allowed to each man less than one third of the space allotted to men at Camp Sumter, and one seventh of the space deemed necessary and prescribed by the United States Army Regulations. The estimates of the different prisons named above are taken from the official report to the House of Repre-

sentatives by their committee, and confirmed by the personal narratives of several individuals who had carefully measured the several places named while confined in them. And my authority for the exact number of prisoners confined at Cahaba is the statement of an ex-Confederate officer, a part of whose duty it was to know positively the number of Federal prisoners there confined during 1864 and 1865. Had every man confined in Castle Morgan been buried within its walls, the major portion must have been packed as closely as possible, lying upon their sides, to have avoided placing one layer above another. It is a matter of doubt whether any large prison in the civilized world, during the present century, was ever so crowded. The men who were in Camp Sumter had the same experience during the last ten days of their confinement that they had been accustomed to during the months immediately preceding. The men who went forth from Castle Morgan had, during their last ten days of confinement there, an experience far eclipsing the most rigorous hardships they had known before. For two days a majority stood knee-deep in cold water, and during a portion of that time had only raw meal and raw bacon for food. For eight days longer they lived over a cold lake, drank such water as should be found only in closed sewers, had food that kept fitting company with the drink, and when at last they left the prison they were stripped of all the quilts in their possession, and



when possible they were deprived of their blankets. Many men whose capital of vitality was so great that they could pass the preceding months in comparative health, broke down completely under this last unheard-of ordeal, and only reached the hospitals of Vicksburg and Jefferson barracks to be soon carried forth stark and stiff upon the dead man's stretcher.

## CHAPTER XV.

LOSS OF THE SULTANA—A MAJOR PORTION OF HER PASSENGERS FROM CASTLE MORGAN—ONLY FOUR GREAT BATTLES IN WHICH THE UNION LOSS IN KILLED WAS GREATER—PERSONAL NARRATIVES.

**B**UT a still greater horror was in store for the ill-fated inmates of Cahaba. Lashed to the levee of Vicksburg was the strong and capacious steamer Sultana. Her decks were covered with cots and beds for the ghastly skeletons called "paroled prisoners." Wherever it was possible to stow away a human being within her capacious guards, men who had fought starvation and cold, hunger and heat—men who had fought vermin and filth, despondency and death, were crowded in. A large per cent of her living freight were the former captives of Castle Morgan. With her decks, above and below, crowded to discomfort, with weak-bodied, pinched, and sallow-faced men, the Sultana steamed up the broad Mississippi. Every league of progress brought hope to her passengers: visions of a gray-haired mother whose heart has been bursting to know the fate of her boy; visions of a sister into

whose eyes tears welled up at the mention of his name, came to the men and gave to them a new life. Memphis is reached ; here a large amount of fuel is taken on and the boat goes steaming Northward. Night settles down upon them, and when all but those to whom is given the care of the boat, and those to whom pain denies the boon of sleep, are lost in unconsciousness, a great flash lights up the darkness, and, mid crash and roar, mid falling timbers and mangled comrades, hundreds are thrown into the dark waters. The boiler has exploded, the boat is on fire, and no help is at hand.

In the long list embracing every engagement of the Rebellion, the Union killed on the field have exceeded the loss of lives by this explosion in only four great battles : the Wilderness, Gettysburg, Spottsylvania and Antietam. There have been more lives lost by this explosion than were killed from the Union ranks in the combined battles of Fredericksburg, Franklin, and Five Forks ; more than were killed from the Union ranks on the fields of battle at Pea Ridge, Perryville, and Pleasant Hill combined ; more than the Union loss in killed at Chancellorsville, or Chickamauga, or Shiloh. Only the fact that it occurred just at the close of the great war, just when the country was bowed in grief at the murder of its beloved first citizen, gave it relatively a minor place in the history of that time.

Of the hundreds whose names were upon her list, over three fourths were lost. No one knows the cause of the explosion. Strong partisans charge that a powerful explosive was placed in the fuel taken on at Memphis by Confederate agents—no one knows,\* but by that explosion one third of all the captives who, during the previous winter, were confined at Cahaba have been blotted from existence. The ex-prisoners, passengers upon the *Sultana*, were composed of soldiers, a part of whom had been confined at Andersonville, a part at Cahaba. The relative proportion of each cannot be definitely stated, but an extensive

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\* Since the above was written the Associated Press has published the following :

#### A WAR EPISODE.

##### A RAY OF LIGHT ON A TERRIBLE EXPLOSION ON THE STEAMER SULTANA.

ST. LOUIS, Mo., May 7, 1888.—The awful explosion on the steamer *Sultana*, near Memphis, twenty-three years ago, in which nearly two thousand Union soldiers lost their lives, has always been a mystery. The survivors at their reunion have recently made a number of statements regarding the affair, but the most sensational story has been told by a resident of this city, William Streeter.

This statement fixes the explosion as a result of design. He claims that the noted Confederate blockade-runner and mail-carrier named Robert Lowden, better known during the war as Charles Dale, was the author of the terrible disaster. Streeter claims that Lowden told him after the close of the war that while the *Sultana* lay at Memphis wharf he smuggled aboard a large lump of coal in which was concealed a torpedo.

This he deposited on the fuel pile in front of the boiler for the express purpose of causing the destruction of the boat. What has become of Lowden is unknown.



inquiry, and a careful estimate therefrom, seems to show those from Cahaba to have been a majority. To the history of Cahaba, with its relatively small number of inmates, the destruction of the doomed boat was of much more importance than to the history of Andersonville, and any narrative of Cahaba that omitted the story of the wreck would be incomplete. To paint a more vivid picture of the disaster, I shall quote in their own language the remembrances of several comrades.

The *Sultana* arrived at Vicksburg from New Orleans, with passengers and crew numbering a little over one hundred. There she took on board two thousand and thirty-one Union ex-prisoners, a few soldiers for guards, some Christian Commission men, and a small squad of ex-Confederate soldiers going to their homes in Arkansas and Tennessee. At Memphis she took on board a supply of fuel, and started North at a little past midnight of April 27th, 1865. She had gone but a few miles when her boiler or something in her furnace exploded, blowing a large number into the river, scalding, crushing, and burning many more. In a few minutes she was on fire, slowly burned to the water's edge, then sank upon the Arkansas side of the Mississippi, three or four miles above Memphis. Of the twenty-two hundred on board at the time of the disaster, fourteen hundred and forty-three were lost at once, and of the

seven hundred and fifty-seven rescued, nearly three hundred died in the hospitals at Memphis in the following twenty days. So that a careful estimate places the loss of life caused by the explosion at about seventeen hundred and fifty, the greatest loss of life from a marine disaster that ever occurred upon the Western Hemisphere.

The first quotation was the experience of W. A. Fast, now an attorney residing at Sedalia, Mo. : " Much of my reminiscence of the Sultana disaster must be my own part in the affair, for each one was too busy saving himself to give much time or thought to his neighbors. I was sleeping on the top or hurricane deck, and within a few feet of the rear end. With me were five chums from my own town, Orange, Ashland County, O. Our heads were resting on the sloping side of a metallic life-boat when the steamer blew up. I feel a jerk and jar, some hot water falls on my face and hands, and I wake, and seemed among the first on foot in that quarter. In a moment all were on their feet and seemingly aware of what had happened. In a minute or two it seemed that a hundred men were tugging at the boat. It was thrown overboard, and after it, making a plunge of perhaps twenty feet into the dark water, went from a hundred to a hundred and fifty men. My chums followed that boat and lost their lives—at least I never saw or heard of them afterward. I deemed it safer for a

time to remain on the Sultana than to take my chances with a hundred men fighting for a little boat. I went forward at once. She was a side-wheeler, and one wheel-house was gone and the other shattered and hanging out from the centre of the boat. The front part of the boat was blown, nobody knows where, and with it, I doubt not, five hundred men. Fire at once started and came up through the pilot-house, the latter seeming to act as a flue or smoke-stack. I jumped down on to the second or middle floor, or deck, and went into the state-rooms to find a life-preserver. There was no person in the rooms and I found no life-preservers, so I came out and went forward to where the floor was broken off. The men were rushing out from the lower floor or deck, and pouring over the prow into the dark water like a flock of sheep through a gap in a fence. After a time I broke a door from a state-room, went forward to the edge of the floor as torn off by the explosive, and, after watching the progress of events a few minutes, threw my door down on to the mass of débris which covered the lower floor or deck, and jumped down on to it. After the most of the men had left the boat, I took the door, made my way forward to the prow of the boat, pulled down fifteen or twenty feet of rope from the jack-staff and tied it to the door, leaving several loops to catch on to in order to hold the door when in the water. A few big, burly deck hands were still on

board, flying hither and thither, crazed with excitement. Once or twice they seized my door and tried to wrench it from my grasp, for it was the best buoy then in sight. To save it I walked back to where the stairway went up to the second deck, wedged it in between some timbers, took out a small jack-knife and stood to defend my possession. By this time the boat was wrapped in flames and lighted up the river for miles. I could see men in all directions struggling, swimming, sinking. My plan was to stick to the boat as long as I could and until the swimmers were well out of my way. Now, a word about what I saw preceding this, while standing on the upper deck. I saw many men standing on the débris and on the edge of the boat, just ready for the final leap, indulging their vocal and oratorical powers in a great variety of ways. Some were praying, some singing, and some swearing a 'blue streak.' Some would curse Abe Lincoln, Jeff Davis, General Grant—any and everybody prominently connected with the war. Some were crying like children. Some, muttered curses on everything in heaven above or on the earth below. Some prayed very loud, and most passionately; others were getting off very formal and graceful prayers—all in dead earnest. Now and then a very calm individual met my gaze, but I didn't see a soldier calmly sit down and light his pipe. It was said that the steamer blew up at one o'clock A.M. At half-past



two it was becoming so hot that I could not stay longer on the boat unless I climbed down into the hold. Some few did that. I did not like that idea. I then had on nothing but my shirt and drawers. A small, open-faced watch was tied to my drawers and was tucked inside the waistband. As I stood on the prow, my door in readiness, I pulled out the watch; it was then half-past two. I threw my door into the water, jumped in after it, and was soon afloat. Hardly had I got righted when a comrade appeared and took hold of my door, then another and another, and soon half a dozen of us were struggling for that door. I was the strongest at first, and wrenched one hand after another from it, but too many came. Soon I became exhausted, and within twenty minutes I was nearly drowned two or three times. I lost my door, and with my door went for a time, it seems, my power of memory. From the time I lost that door until daylight there is in my life an entire blank. I do not know where I was or what I was doing. About daylight I found myself hanging to some very small bushes, and water so deep beneath me that I could not touch bottom. Looking about me, I noticed that there was as much as from forty to sixty acres of water surface covered with small bushes and twigs, and these were but the tops of small cottonwood and willow trees, whose roots were from ten to twenty feet below the surface of the water. At the

foot of this island, and about a quarter of a mile down the river, I saw the hull of the vessel, the upper decks all burned off, slowly turning round and round in an eddy. I made my way from bush to bush down to it. On it were several men. I tried to climb upon it, and only succeeded in doing so after, perhaps, one hour's effort and almost complete exhaustion, narrowly escaping death by drowning two other times by falling back into the water after getting nearly on the boat. The only way of making our way from the water to the top of the hull—for there were several of us trying the feat—was by a rope and a chain let down by the boys already on the craft. It was about sunrise, I think, when I made my first trial, and perhaps half-past seven when I got on the boat. This remnant of the boat was then about three fourths of a mile from the Arkansas shore, and from two to four miles from the Tennessee shore, and I think about five miles from Memphis. On the remnant of the boat was from two to three feet of débris—coal, wood, etc.—all afire and alive with intense heat, save and except about twenty feet of the floor nearest the prow. Here lay, I should think, two or three wagon-loads of cast-off clothing, blankets, etc. When I got on the boat there was about twenty-five persons on it, about twenty of whom were able-bodied, the balance scalded or maimed. We pulled up out of the water about twelve more, making in all thirty-seven, I think, who

linked their fortunes, for the time, to the burning boat in its last struggle. Soon after I got on the boat, I recognized, floating along on a piece of siding about ten feet long, Sergeant Owens, of Sandusky, O., one of the men who had escaped from Cahaba prison and was hunted down with blood-hounds and brought back. I threw Owens a small rope. I tied to this a big rope, and Owens pulled up to the island of brush, hauled the big rope out, and tied it to the limb of a fallen tree. Thus we tied up the hull, and here she burned till she sank. And here we, the thirty-seven, less the wounded, fought the fire till relief came about eight or nine o'clock. We got off in this way: About eight o'clock we saw a man put off from the Arkansas shore with two hewn logs lashed together. The logs were about one foot square and ten or twelve feet long. He came within about six rods of us and our burning boat, and then stopped for a parley. He said that he could carry only six of us, and if more got on we would all drown. He was afraid to come nearer lest all should leap overboard and get on to his logs. The crisis was getting desperate. Finally, a comrade, whom I called all the morning 'Indiana,' and myself stepped to the edge of the burning hull, and declared in the most solemn manner that if he would approach we would not get on his logs, and would not permit over six persons to get on. He approached, six got on, he took them about half-

way to the Arkansas shore, and they climbed some trees, the branches of which was above the water, most of their trunks beneath. He came and went several times, always taking six, and leaving them in the tree-tops. Finally, he said, the men were too much exhausted, and it took too long to climb a tree, so he began taking the remainder to shore, the men always paddling with their hands and feet so as to speed the trip. All this took time, and more desperate became the chances of those of us still on the burning hull. After a while the floor, though saturated with water and withstanding the fire a long time, burned through at a place near the rear. Then the flames swept clean through under us and up through the large hole near the prow, which operated like a chimney. So it was fire on both sides and under our feet. We feared our fate must be death by burning, yet we hung blankets and blouses about us, dipped up water with our quart coffee-cups, with ropes attached, and poured over our heads, keeping the clothing and blankets on us saturated. We fought the fire and still hoped to get the last man off before she sank or burned completely. Finally, it came to the last thirteen men, five of whom were about helpless from wounds and scalds. Something seemed to say as the boat left the Arkansas shore for the next to the last load that that was the last trip, and six or seven must perish. 'Indiana' and I, and others, hurriedly discussed the sit-



uation. Should we strong ones take to the raft and leave the helpless? Human instinct struggling for self-preservation seemed to argue yes. But the maimed ones took in the situation at once, and begged for the strong ones not to abandon them. We did not. The raft approached; we, 'Indiana' and myself, put on the helpless; then some one said that seven must go that load or the next. I said, 'Seven goes this load,' slipped down the cable, straddled a log, and with hands and feet helped to pull for the shore. We landed, the raft went back, got the other six off almost overcome with heat and smoke. The raft had got only about six rods from the burning hull when it sank, leaving nothing but the jack-staff sticking above water to mark where she went down. There, four days after, when we were on our way up the river to Cairo, we saw the jack-staff, a sentinel on duty, marking the spot where lay the remains of the *Sultana*. About eleven o'clock, a boat, whose mission it was to gather survivors, came along, and a little body of about fifty gathered together on the Arkansas shore, boarded her and proceeded to Memphis. Black with smoke, and burned and bruised and scarred, we walked down the gang-plank, and as we stepped on shore the ladies of the Sanitary Commission (the Lord bless those noble women!) met us, took us aside one by one to the brink of the river, washed us, assisted those of us who still had remnants of clothing on

to remove them (many were naked, or supplied only with a blanket, worn Indian style), then clothed each of us with a red shirt and drawers of the common sanitary kind, placed us in an ambulance or other vehicle, and sent us up-town to a hospital. We promenaded the streets of Memphis three days in that picturesque garb, hatless and shoeless. Then Uncle Sam came to our relief, hunted us out a full new suit of army blue, and soon we were on our way to Cairo and Camp Chase. Some incidents and scenes during the morning and day following the catastrophe. From daylight till noon one could hear the boys, who were scattered up and down the river for a distance, it is said, of forty miles, perched upon trees, rocks, points of islands, or hanging to the brush and in the water, indulging their humor in a great variety of ways. Some were singing old and familiar army songs and patriotic airs; some negro melodies; some mocking the birds; some sitting upon the rocks, and conscious of their ridiculous plight, raised a laugh among their companions by mimicking frogs—in fact, every living thing that raised its voice above the sound of the waters—for the Mississippi ‘was on a tear’—was quite sure to find an imitator of the sound it made. The most pitiable scene I witnessed was that of a lad hemmed in by fire and water and hanging to the burning boat. Under the guard of the boat and attached to it were large iron rings, and at

a point about midway along the right-hand side of the vessel, the lad lay on the water under the boat's guards, holding to one of these rings, or, rather, to something attached to the rings. Over him the top of the guards was on fire, and on both sides of him was fire for a distance of many feet, perhaps twenty feet. He, of course, realized to the full extent his peril, and as the fire slowly approached from the sides he begged most piteously for us to save him. We could easily hear all he said—indeed, could not help hearing it. Sometimes he would pray, then shout for help, then would cry and beg and coax, in the most heartrending manner. He said that he had a mother in Indiana, and that she was well off, and if we would save him she would give us all that she was worth. Every inducement his mind could suggest to move us to save him was expressed. For an hour or two he held to his ring, the fire still creeping closer and closer, as it made its way through the water-soaked timber. We could do nothing for him; a wall of fire surrounded him. We floated him some ropes, but the fire would burn them off before he could clutch them. Of timber or boards we had none, except one large pole; we threw that off, but he failed to grasp it, as, doubtless, he was unable to swim. Finally, as the fire crept closer and closer to him, and he breathed the hot air and smoke, his voice grew hoarse and more feeble. He talked more and more of his home

and mother in Indiana, until at last his hold relaxed; and he sank into the friendly waters beneath him. His last audible words were of home and his mother. Poor boy! I shall never forget him and his piteous appeal. It was the most heartrending of all the sad scenes of nearly three years of my army and prison life."

The following was written by M. C. White, now of Hartford, Mich.: "I lay asleep on the hurricane deck, aft of the wheel-house, on the Arkansas side, and was not hurt by the explosion. I first thought that a rebel battery had fired on us, and a shell had exploded on board. Officers gave orders to remain quiet, for the boat was going ashore; but little attention was paid to these orders, as it was soon evident that every one must look out for himself, as the boat immediately took fire. Most of the boys stripped off their clothes and jumped into the river, which was cold and swift, and some three or four miles wide, and so dark that you could not see the shore. The scenes were heart-rending; the wounded and dying begging for help—some praying, and some swearing—while those in the water would catch hold of one another, and go down in squads. The fire was getting so hot that I soon saw that I must get into the water. I was quite an expert swimmer, and thought if I could get away from the crowd I might save myself, though I was quite weak, having been sick a good deal of the



time I was in prison. I went to the gangway to go below, but found that it was gone, so I jumped down on the lower deck. What a sight—men dead and dying, parts of bodies, arms, legs, and the wreck of the boat, all in one mingled mass ! As I stopped to take one hurried glance around, I heard some one near me exclaim, ‘ For God’s sake, some one help me get this man out ! ’ I turned, and saw that it was a lieutenant of a Kentucky regiment. He was a very large man, and was called ‘ Big Kentuck.’ He had found a man that was fast by both feet, a large piece of the wreck having fallen across them as he lay asleep. I took hold and helped the lieutenant, but we could not get him out, and no doubt he roasted alive, for the fire was then getting very hot. I then went to the edge of the boat, took off my shoes, pulled down my cap, and plunged in with my clothes on. I thought I would be better off with them on, as they would keep me warmer. I was very fortunate in making my way through the crowd without any catching hold of me, and also in finding a plank ; but I did not go far with it before a comrade grabbed it that was about half drowned, and apparently crazy. The plank would have answered for us both if he had stayed at one end. I tried to reason with him, but he, hearing my voice, would keep coming for me, grabbing and yelling. Once he got almost in reach of me, and I was afraid to have him get hold of my clothes for fear he

would drown us both, so I left him with the plank, and struck out without any support. It was very dark, and all I could see was the burning steamer. I could not tell which way to go to make land, so I floated on the water and let the current take me. When it came daylight, I was going around a bend in the river, and the current took me near the shore. I could see trees, but no land, as the river was very high and the banks all overflowed. I thought my only chance was to get to those trees. I was very cold, and nearly exhausted then, and when I got there the first tree I came to—the water being up to the branches—I threw my arm over a limb, and had just strength enough to hang on. It was some time before I could climb up out of the water. I found that I had come down the river six miles, and landed on the Arkansas side. As it got lighter, I could see comrades all around me, some in trees and some on drift-wood, and nearly all naked. To make it worse, the buffalo gnats were so thick that they nearly ate us up. Then I was glad that I kept on my clothes, for a good many chilled to death after getting out before they were picked up. I was rescued by the steamer *Silver Spray*, after being in my tree about three hours. We were treated kindly on the boat. Bedclothes were taken from the state-rooms and given to the boys to wrap around them. We soon landed in Memphis. The excitement was intense.

It seemed that every one in the city was down to the wharf, and nearly every hack in the city was in charge of a soldier, backed down to the wharf-boat ready to take us to the hospital as fast as we were ready. As we stepped from the gang-plank into the wharf-boat, to greet us were ladies of the Sanitary Commission and Sisters of Charity (God bless them), who handed to each of us a red flannel shirt and drawers. As fast as we donned our red suits we stepped into a carriage and was driven rapidly to the hospital, where all was done for us that could be to make us comfortable. Many died after reaching the hospital. Out of the twenty-two hundred on board the *Sultana*, fifteen hundred filled an untimely and watery grave. There are many touching incidents connected with that disaster, but I fear my letter is already too long. If this should meet the eye of any surviving comrade of that disaster, I should be very glad to hear from him."

Perry Summerville, of the Second Indiana Cavalry, has told his experience on this terrible occasion, as follows: "My quarters were on the cabin deck, on the guard to the left, over and opposite the boilers. We got to Memphis on the evening of April 26th. There the steamer unloaded a large amount of sugar, after which she ran up to the coal-barge, and was taking in coal, and that was the last that I knew till I found myself in the river. In the explosion I must

have been thrown fully one hundred feet. I sank only once. My first thought was that the steamer had been running close to shore, and I had been dragged off by a limb. I was very much excited for a few minutes, and then I struck out for the steamer. I had no sooner done so than I saw that something was wrong on board. I could see steam and fire, and hear screams and groans proceeding from the boat and passengers, so I began to swim down stream. I had not gone far before the boat was wrapped in flames. The scene that followed beggars description. Hundreds of passengers suddenly aroused from peaceful sleep, bruised or scalded by the explosion, or scarcely able to crawl from battle wounds or starvation in prison, were throwing or dragging themselves from the burning boat into the deep, swift river, there, many of them, to find watery graves. The utter despair and confusion of the hour were unfadingly wrought on my memory; but I cannot paint the picture, and must leave it to the imagination of the reader. In swimming down the river I should have drowned if I had not fortunately got hold of a rail. I could see the timber on either bank, but could not make in to shore. About two miles above Memphis I succeeded in adding a large plank to my rail, which I drew across the front end, holding to the rail with my feet, and the plank with my hands. I lay so near the surface that I suffered extremely from cold. I



was picked up at Memphis, my rescuer being a colored man, and placed on board a boat. I had been two hours in the river, and was so chilled and numb that I could not stand. Besides, I had been scalded on the back, and bruised on the breast in the explosion, from the effects of which I spat blood for some time. Two miles below the scene of the explosion a gun-boat passed us, going up the river. The many victims of the explosion that were close to it failed to attract attention. At any rate the boat did not stop.

“A little later on I heard a horse coming down the river. When he came close enough, I distinguished at least a dozen men clinging to him. I kept clear of the horse, or, rather, the men, for fear of losing my rail. The poor animal was swimming down stream, but whether or not the men who clung to him were ever rescued, I have no means of knowing. I was finally overtaken by Jerry Parker, of the Second Michigan Cavalry, who for quite a distance swam by my side. All knew Jerry, who was a great favorite. He was astride a barrel, and was as good-humored as ever—at least circumstances considered. We would have cheered him, his presence so inspired us, but of course that was impracticable. We were together quite a while, our company getting larger at times as the current bore us down. Jerry told us to be of good cheer, saying we would all be rescued. I am glad to say he was among the number saved.”

George H. Young, formerly of the Ninety-fifth Ohio, now a resident of Evans, Col., has given the following reminiscence of the occurrence :

" I, with S. Muller, of the Thirteenth O. V. I., W. F. Clancy, Twentieth O. V. I., and two others, acquaintances, were sleeping about half-way from the cabin to the stairway, and had been asleep three or four hours, when we were awakened by the explosion. As it was at the time cloudy, threatening rain, and an occasional flash of distant lightning was visible, I supposed for a moment that the lightning had struck the boat, and so exclaimed to my comrades. Our squad of five were all pinned down to the deck on which we were sleeping by the débris of the hurricane deck which had fallen upon us from above. The man on my left was killed instantly by a timber falling across his body. A soldier on top of the roof just over us heard our cries for help, and broke away a few pieces of boards over Clancy which released him, and in turn he broke away some from over me, and soon I, too, was free. Then Clancy and myself tried to release Muller, but the timber over him was so strong and heavy that we could make but little progress before a gust of wind drove the flames right in our faces, and we were compelled to retreat to the opposite side of the boat. In a few moments the flames were driven in another direction by the boat turning about ; so we ran back to Muller again

and made the utmost exertions, but shortly the flames returned and drove us away, though it was agonizing to listen to the beseechings of our comrade while we were so helpless. We could not escape from his hoarse cries, and, cruel as it seems, we were relieved when death ended his horrible agony. Then Clancy and I climbed over the stairway and got down to the boiler deck. Here Clancy's courage and self-possession completely gave way, and he became frantic with excitement and fear. We found few sound men on the boiler deck, but a large number of injured ones. Some of these were trying to get forward, crawling along with broken limbs or badly scalded, and many implored us for aid, as they could not swim. Some, in their agony, crawled to the edge of the boat and rolled themselves into the water to drown. The fire was raging above the boiler deck when we got there, and when the wind changed it would come toward us, and we were compelled to get down to let it blow over us. Four of us tried to get a large plank from the coal bunk, but all our united efforts failed to pull it off. Once or twice I stopped Clancy from jumping, telling him of the drowning men visible in all directions, but at last, when the fire was sweeping forward, I saw him run to the side of the boat and jump off, and that was the last of him to me. When the heat became so great that no one could remain on the portion of the boat where I was, and as it was im-

possible to reach any other part of the boat where the heat was less, I picked up a rubber blanket, threw it upon the surface of the water—there was nothing else obtainable—and a moment later leaped from the boat. The blanket kept me from going under, though the water came to my eyes. As I was steadying myself, not looking toward the boat, a person near me grasped me by the shirt-sleeve. To break that hold required a great effort, but, drawing myself up, I put my fist in his side, gave a strong, sudden push and broke from him, and a moment after freed myself from another drowning person who was dragging me beneath the water. Though not excited, I had to exert myself to keep above water and away from drowning men, and I was getting tired. Soon I determined to take off my drawers as they were full of water and were an impediment to swimming. I unloosed them at the waist, and tried, by treading the water, to get them off, forgetting that they were fast around my ankles. I soon realized that I could not get them untied, and they were fast dragging me beneath the river's surface, and only after a long and wearisome struggle did I succeed in replacing them. By this time my left hand was paining me very much, and raising it up to the light of the burning boat, I found that my wrist, thumb, and two fingers were blistered and badly swollen. When the air struck it the pain was greater than when in the water,



so I kept it beneath as much as possible. Looking around, I saw a blue object coming toward me, so I swam slowly away, fearing it might be a drowning man. Watching it longer, I observed no motion, so let it come near, when I cautiously touched it. It proved to be a pair of pants. These I thought would be of service when I got out, so I threw them over my left arm. I soon saw another object, which proved to be a small piece of the roof. This I got under my arm, as I was getting very tired. Still drifting with the current, barely keeping myself above water, I soon picked up half of a cork life-preserver and a cracker-box. I was then happy, for I believed that I was going to get out somewhere. While looking about for the place where I could soonest reach dry land, I heard a splash close by, and turning my head I saw some one trying to swim toward me. As he had nothing to buoy him up, I told him not to catch hold of me and I would give him my cracker-box. A moment after I pushed it toward him and swam on, trusting he would get it. I was very watchful for drowning men, and the least movement made me cautious. I was now, as I thought, rounding a point of land, and expected to land on the Arkansas side. At intervals I heard a halloo. I answered, and was surprised to hear a reply close by. I called again. The answer came, 'How are you fixed?' I replied, 'All right.' Then I asked what he had—if anything. He an-

swered that he was on a log. I called him again to come over near me, but in words more forcible than refined he declined to do so. Then I urged that we could be of mutual assistance in getting into a tree-top. This met with his approval enough for him to come nearer, but not close enough for me to become a partner with him in the possession of the log. Soon we passed from the swift current into still water, and I trusted that the shore must be near by. Looking in the darkness off to my right, I saw against the sky a tree-top and started for it at once, and, aided by an eddy, soon came near it. Just then, when within fifteen or twenty feet of the tree, I was seized with a severe cramp in my legs. With one hand almost disabled previous to this by the injury it had received on the boat, it was impossible for me to keep above the water, and though struggling frantically, I sank beneath the surface for a moment. Doubtless my struggles added to my misfortune, for on ceasing to struggle, and holding closely to the piece of life-preserver, I rose to the surface. The cramp abating, I paddled with my uninjured hand up to the tree, and, seizing a limb within reach, drew myself from the water. Then I called to my unknown companion, who, with his log, swam near. Oh, what a sense of security took possession of me on being firmly seated upon the limb of that tree! As soon as I was sufficiently rested to make any exertion, I gathered up my draw-

ers and fastened them about my waist, and drew on the pants I had picked up in the river. But the chill night wind pierced my clothing like needles, and feeling a benumbing chilliness creeping over me, I dropped back into the water, as its temperature was higher than that of the air. Who ever prayed for 'light, more light,' more earnestly than did I and my companion there clinging to that tree in the darkness and cold! In all directions we could hear the sounds of struggling and shouting human beings. My attention was at length arrested by a voice coming from shoreward and nearer than any other. I replied to the 'Hello,' and immediately a voice asked, 'Where are you?' 'In a tree right here, only a little way from you,' I replied. 'Well, cling to the limb and come toward me, and you can touch ground with your feet.' We joyfully followed his directions, and, as he had told us, found our feet touching ground while the water was up to our breasts. Our new friend was a citizen stopping in a camp near by, and when awakened by the explosion he hastily dressed himself, jumped into his log canoe, and had been exerting himself from that time to the present assisting our boys in getting to the shore. With his canoe it was difficult for him to come to us, through the dense brush, so he directed us to come to him, as he believed that to be the most speedy way to get to his boat. Following his directions we waded toward him, at one place falling com-

pletely under water, but a few minutes after we were—oh, how thankful our hearts, how cheering the thought!—in his canoe. He said we were on an island, and he would take us to a cabin near by. Following us into the boat, with a long pole he pushed through the shallow water to the cabin of which he had spoken, but by the time we arrived there we were so stiff from the cold and long-continued bath that we could only get out of the canoe by his assistance. In front of the house a platform of logs fastened together had been placed evidently by the owner at some previous time. Once on this platform we tried to warm ourselves by exercising for a few minutes, for we saw that there were several persons within, and that the fire around which they were hovering was small and to them a source of but little comfort. The chill air striking our wet clothes, however, drove us to seek some shelter, and we passed into the cabin, where we found two ladies sitting on a ‘trussel,’ two soldiers, badly scalded and burned, lying on a bed, and two others, somewhat injured, lying on the floor. The men on the bed were in dreadful agony, and could not repress their groans, as the wind would at times blow through the cracks between the logs on their writhing bodies. One of the ladies was scantily dressed, and, like all others who had any clothing, hers was dripping with water. The little room gave some evidence of being used for a shelter, so I looked



about hoping to find some cloth of any kind to put on my scalded arm. On looking into a barrel I discovered some flour, and asked if I could have a little to cover over my burns. No one seemed to have any ownership in the flour, but several of those present spoke up at once and urged me to take what I might want. I did so, covering the burned parts thickly with flour, and in a few minutes my suffering from that source was much diminished. Then I went out of the cabin on to the logs fastened in front of the door and found two or three new arrivals, one of whom was a one-armed comrade who was entirely naked, poor from a long prison life, and shivering in the wind. To him I gave my pair of drawers, and then he was willing to go into the cabin into the presence of the ladies, from whose sight he had before shrunk. The pain in my arm and the cold wind compelled me to keep moving backward and forward, sometimes running to keep warm, and this I continued until daylight. From our rescuer we learned of our proximity to Memphis, and gathered hope from the information. About ten o'clock a small steamer, the *Pocahontas*, landed near where we were and took us on board.

"On her we found many comrades who had been picked up previously, and our number so filled the boat that she could rescue no more, and at once started down the river to Memphis. We arrived at Memphis before noon, and on landing I met comrade Eldridge

of Company A, 95, and Mailbre, who was in charge of the Soldiers' Lodge on the river's bank. They gave to each of us some clothing; then I went to the lodge and stayed with them for a few days, nursing my burned arm and keeping quiet. For many days and nights I was so nervous that I could not sleep, and when any of the boats were near and puffing, I shook as if seized with an ague. Night after night would I jump up on hearing any noise, and I had to change my sleeping-place from a bunk to a cot, for I had bumped my head till it was sore. No one was permitted to stay long at the lodge, so comrade Eldridge told me to go to a hospital and report, so that my name should appear as an inmate, then return and stay with them. I reported to Washinger Hospital on Main Street. I had such a dread of going on to a boat, that I thought best to stay till my nerves got more quiet and my hand got well. I was about two weeks in Memphis, when my longing for home overcame my fear of the boats, and I left one morning on the steamer City of Acton, and in good time arrived at home, Columbus, O. No words can portray the joy of the restoration to my family, both to my parents and to myself. As a memento of that terrible night I still suffer from bronchitis and asthma, which has compelled me to reside in Colorado, and, strive as I may, I cannot repress an involuntary fright on hearing in the stillness of the night any unusual noise."

We conclude the story of the *Sultana* with the reminiscence of J. W. Rush, whose experience with us in Castle Morgan is narrated elsewhere in this volume :

“ At the time of the explosion of the steamer *Sultana* I was lying on what is known as the water-box, near the wheel-house on the upper deck, in company with George W. Steward, now a resident of Wellington, Kan. There seemed to be two distinct explosions. The first awakened us, and by the time we were on our feet, the hot steam was coming up through the deck, and immediately another explosion followed. Neither of us were hurt. Having been raised on Lake Erie, and being familiar with boats, I took in the situation at once, and was satisfied that the boilers of the steamer had exploded.

“ I started to the rear of the boat, expecting to make my escape by jumping overboard before the crowd realized the peril they were in, for I well knew that it would be a difficult matter to escape after the twenty-two hundred people that were on board once got aroused to the situation, as I felt that nothing could be done to allay so great an excitement and confusion as would follow. As I reached the stern of the boat I saw a yawl launched from the lower deck with four or five persons in it, all of whom, I believe, were deck hands. I presume they were parties who were on watch at that time. There was a woman who begged piteously to be let into the boat, and from the conversation that

took place, I think she was the wife of one of them, but they realized the situation and got away from the boat as quickly as possible and left her.

“Not being able to get into the yawl, Steward and I then turned to and helped launch the life-boats from the upper deck, but as soon as a boat struck the water, crowds from each deck jumped into it, striking upon one another, and the boat was capsized. This was also true of the second boat that was launched. These boats were turned over and over, and many were drowned in trying to get into them, as every time they would turn bottom side up they would bury from fifty to seventy-five, who were trying to climb in from the opposite side. This was kept up until the crowd had thinned out and the boats drifted off. I doubt whether any were saved in the life-boats, except, possibly, a few who clung to their keels as they drifted down the river. Steward and I kept ourselves occupied in throwing overboard such things as we could manage to tear loose from the state-rooms—doors, blinds, etc. After working awhile we started for the passenger-cabin to see if we could not obtain a life-preserver, but found the steam had filled the cabin and fire was then breaking out near the centre of the boat, and had spread nearly to the upper deck. We then made our way to the lower deck again, and there, in company with several others, helped throw over one of the large state planks, but it had no more than struck the water



before the crowd got on to it, and it was rolled over, and we concluded it was not safe to undertake to escape by that. We then got hold of a mule and tried to force it overboard, but did not succeed. The fire was then working well to the stern of the boat, and it was impossible to get the mule to go a step toward the fire.

"We saw Captain Mason, master of the boat, in his shirt-sleeves and bare-headed, trying to restore order, and asking the crowd to quiet down and be patient, as he thought we would receive assistance very shortly; but to quiet the excitement under such circumstances was impossible.

"Quite a number of ladies came out of the cabin, knelt upon the deck, and, resting their heads upon the rail of the stern of the boat, prayed for help. The captain tried to quiet them by saying that he thought that help would reach us soon. Of all the seventeen lady passengers on board only one was saved, and several of the wives of the deck hands were also lost, which, I think, made a total of twenty-two ladies lost. I believe Captain Mason did all that any person could do under the circumstances. He and a majority of the officers of the boat were among the lost. Finding that nothing further could be done, and the flames were gradually working to the rear, and the entire boat now nearly in flames, I stepped on the after-guard and held that position until the flames

drove me off. I stayed as long as I could in hopes that the crowd would be dispersed. It was almost sure death to jump while the crowd was around the boat, as hundreds were seizing anything that came within their reach and pulled others under in order to save their own lives. Steward jumped overboard first with his clothes all on, while I undressed, being afraid that their weight would so encumber me that I might not be able to reach shore, not having entirely recovered from my wounds received nearly two years previous; then I made a leap, diving head foremost, and getting away without any one catching hold of me. Coming to the surface of the water a short distance from the boat, and getting my hair out of my face, I looked back and could see quite a number leaping from the boat at the time, and as I drifted out of sight I could still see by the light of the boat persons clinging to her.

“I got hold of a small piece of board, on which I rested myself and drifted with the current, as the night was very dark and it was impossible to see which way to swim to shore. I drifted in this position for some fifteen or twenty minutes, when I came upon a party who was resting upon one end of a door, the other end of which was raised out of the water. I ran against it before I saw it, and rested myself upon it, which gave me more support than the board. In this way I got along well for some distance. I tried to talk to my

companion, but could not get any reply. He seemed to be hurt in some way. All this time I could hear people calling and praying for help, while others, who were reasonably secure upon state planks, bales of hay, etc., were using their old prison slang and expressions, that one would hardly think it possible for men to use under such circumstances—such as: ‘Lie down and keep cool,’ ‘hot skillet,’ ‘fresh fish,’ ‘keep your hands on your pocketbook,’ ‘swim or die,’ and such expressions as would only be used by men who had been for years accustomed to the hardships of severe campaigns and been inured to misfortunes of all kinds.

“About that time a steamer came down the river and rendered all the assistance possible, by throwing over hay, launching their yawls and life-boats, in which they carried a torch in the bow of the boat, and throwing ropes, and picking up such as came in their wake. A yawl came near us when I called for help, and a rope was thrown to me, but as I reached with my right hand for the rope, my companion reached for me and got hold of my hair, which at the time was very long. He seized my hair with a grasp firm enough to pull me on my back and get me under water, but his hold soon relaxed, and as I came up the yawl passed out of sight, and I was again left in darkness and drifted along with the current of the river. I was a good swimmer,

but realized the fact that I could do nothing but keep above water, so I made no effort only to float, in hopes the current would carry me ashore. I drifted along for some time, when I ran into a stump that was floating in the water and struck it with so much force that there are now three small scars on my breast made by the sharp roots of that stump.

“Those who have any knowledge of trying to handle a round piece of timber in the water can realize how difficult it is to support one’s self, especially in the current of the river, upon a piece of wood of such ill shape as a stump with roots protruding in all directions. Though having had years of experience, in fact from childhood, with such upon the lakes in sport, it was impossible for me to balance myself upon this stump, and after trying for some time until I was nearly exhausted, I had to give it up for fear it would wear me out, and I again struck out and let the current carry me along. It was not long after that when day began to break, and I could see a dark spot ahead of me that looked like shore, but before I fully realized the fact I struck against a lot of drift-wood and threw myself out upon it, and in a very short time was on solid foundation. Here I met four or five of the boys, who had reached this point before me. I seemed strong, though I had been in the water nearly two hours, but when the air struck me I wilted



like a leaf, and though knowing perfectly well what was the matter with me, I was not able to help myself, and had it not been for those on the drift I would have chilled to death in a very short time ; but the boys gave me prompt assistance, and after considerable rubbing I was again on my feet and ready to assist others. As I was without any clothing, one of the boys, who had wrung out his clothing until it had become partially dry, gave me a shirt, and in company with two or three others I went into the water several times to help others upon the drift.

“ Persons not used to the water would invariably be carried under by the current, as they would grab the log, the log revolving and carrying them under ; it was only those who were used to this who could throw themselves upon a log in the water, and we watched closely for the few that came within reach. By stretching out upon the logs, holding each other's feet, one of us managed to keep close to the water's edge—in fact, lay so the water could run over us all the time, and in that way we pulled out three or four who struck our drift.

“ It was then daylight, and as I was running from one log to another trying to strike another drift where we saw one of our number hanging to some brush to assist him on top of the logs, I heard my name called, and on looking around found it was my friend Steward, who had landed within ten rods of the spot, though I

had not seen him since we jumped from the steamer until that moment.

“Soon after a steamer came across from Memphis and we were taken aboard and cared for by the Sisters of Charity, who did all in their power for those who were picked up. I was taken to the Soldiers’ Home with my friend Steward, where we remained until we got a supply of clothing, when some of General Washburn’s staff came and took the names of those who were not hurt and were able to give an account of the explosion. Myself, with about fifteen others, reported at General Washburn’s headquarters, and there I was requested to answer such questions as were put to me by one of the staff officers—as to my knowledge of the explosion of the steamer, what I saw, etc.

“After being dismissed from General Washburn’s headquarters, Steward and I smuggled our way on board a steamer, and, being out of money, begged our way home, telling our story as we went. I reached my home, Kelley’s Island, O., on May 5th, 1865, at one o’clock in the morning, having rowed across Lake Erie in a row-boat, a distance of twelve miles from Sandusky City.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

FOOD AT CASTLE MORGAN—DECAYED BEEF—POOR QUALITY OF MEAL—A CONFEDERATE INSPECTOR-GENERAL IS INDIGNANT AT THE FOOD FURNISHED TO CAPTIVES THERE—REPORT OF CONFEDERATE INSPECTOR-GENERAL CHANDLER—HE CALLS ATTENTION TO THE ABUNDANCE OF FOOD—REMENYI ECLIPSED—RATS—LICE.

IN the previous chapter we have reviewed some of the reasons for the silence of history upon the subject of Cahaba and its prison. To treat the subject fully it was necessary to anticipate some facts, and depart from the chronological order that had previously been followed. We return now to a consideration of the daily life of the men there confined.

The average full ration for one day furnished to us was a scant pint and a half of corn-meal uncooked, ground coarse, and containing ground cob, bacon, a piece the size of the first two fingers of an ordinary

hand, and a small amount of salt. On rare occasions, cow peas—a kind of colored bean usually infested with bugs—was issued, more rarely molasses was issued—perhaps a dozen times in six months.

Pumpkins were said to have been issued to some of the men. I never saw a pumpkin while there. Flour replaced meal a very few times. About one fourth of the time beef was issued in lieu of bacon. This was all—no vinegar, no pepper, no sugar, no vegetables. For all practical purposes only the meal, bacon, beef, and salt need be mentioned; the other articles named were but luxuries. That a comparison may be made between the amount furnished us and the amount deemed necessary to sustain properly the average soldier, I give the United States Army ration: Corn-meal when issued in place of flour, 20 ozs.; fresh beef, 20 ozs., or bacon, 12 ozs.; rice, 1.6 ozs.; peas (or beans), 2.4 ozs.; coffee browned, 1.28 ozs.; sugar, 2.4 ozs.; vinegar, 1 gill; pepper, 0.4 oz.; salt, 0.6 oz.; with occasional issues of potatoes, desiccated vegetables, etc.

If any one will weigh the amount of meal and meat I have stated as our daily ration, they will learn that it was not more than half of what is deemed necessary for the soldiers of our army, to whom were also issued the other articles I have named. In tabular form the disparity is more obvious.



| U. S. ARMY RATION DAILY. |             | CAHABA RATION DAILY.                                            |               |
|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Corn-meal .....          | 20 ozs.     | Corn-meal, of which a small part was ground cobs and husks..... | 10 to 12 ozs. |
| Bacon, in lieu of beef.. | 12 "        | Bacon, in lieu of beef..                                        | 5 to 7 "      |
| Beef, in lieu of bacon.. | 20 "        | Beef, in lieu of bacon..                                        | 8 to 10 "     |
| Peas.....                | 2.4 "       | Peas infested with bugs                                         | very rarely.  |
| Rice.....                | 1.6 "       | Rice.....                                                       | none.         |
| Coffee.....              | 1.28 "      | Coffee.....                                                     | "             |
| Sugar .....              | 2.4 "       | Sugar .....                                                     | "             |
| Vinegar.....             | 1 gill.     | Vinegar.....                                                    | "             |
| Pepper.....              | 0.4 oz.     | Pepper.....                                                     | "             |
| Salt.....                | 0.6 "       | Salt.....perhaps                                                | 0.6 oz.       |
| Potatoes.....            | occasional. | Potatoes.....                                                   | none.         |
| Desiccated vegetables..  | "           | Desiccated vegetables..                                         | "             |

On October 16th, D. T. Chandler, Assistant Inspector-General C. S. A., visited Cahaba in his official capacity, and in reporting upon the condition of Castle Morgan, makes use of the following language: (See Congressional Report, Treatment Prisoners, page 698.) "Their food has consisted exclusively of bread ([?] should be corn-meal) and meat; two issues of rice only having been made them since June last (*i.e.*, in four months), and no peas or beans in lieu of it, those on hand being utterly unfit for use. The reason assigned for this failure (the guard forces having received rice regularly during this time) is that the commissary was not ordered to issue it. The commanding officer (Colonel Jones) states that he was under the impression they always received it.

"No vinegar has been issued for some months past, although the assistant commissary, Captain Wheadon, informs me good vinegar could be readily obtained at Mobile by writing for it.

"This is an eligible locality for a prison depot, not only for the facilities of transportation of supplies and prisoners, but for subsisting them cheaply and procuring for them the vegetable food of the adjacent country."

The statement made above as to the kind and quantity of rations furnished, and confirmed by the quotation from the report of Inspector-General Chandler, was not the most unpleasant feature of our commissariat. The quantity was inadequate, the quality was too often disgusting.

For the first day or two after our arrival at Castle Morgan it was moderately cool, and at that time fresh beef was supplied instead of the usual bacon. When the weather was cool the beef did not become offensive by the time it was brought into prison, but as it was usually exceedingly hot, especially during the middle of the days of the summer and early fall months, sour, nauseating beef was more often the rule than the exception. The aroma perceived while cutting it was not like that of the new-blown rose, so I sought among the men of my company for one whose stomach would not easily revolt. I found a sergeant of a Michigan regiment—one who declared

that nothing could make him sick—and persuaded him into relieving me from the duty of dividing the beef among the different messes.

Men so hungry they could have eaten any food, however coarse, could not overcome the natural loathing of the decaying, offensive meat, and it was by them tossed away. Knowing the wonderful power of charcoal to absorb gases, offensive or inoffensive, I tried it upon the offensive meat. Charcoal could be gathered from our little fires, then it was broken into small pieces, a layer placed in the bottom of some dish, then beef and charcoal in alternate layers were placed on this ; it blackened the meat, but if the putrefaction was only superficial, usually the offensive odors were absorbed, the smell of decay removed, and the carrion became edible. So strong, however, were the prejudices of some, they could not and, seemingly, would not understand that the meat had undergone a process of purification, and to them the blackened beef was more disgusting than when red and slippery. Others quickly grasped the idea of disinfecting the meat, but, careless in their methods, or urged on by hunger, they hastened to cook and consume it before it had been fully disinfected. As a result the putrefactive products produced violent emesis and catharsis, and henceforth the mere sight of the beef bleached their cheeks and brought the cold sweat of qualmishness and nausea from every pore.

Our other chief food was meal ground quite coarse. With the meal was always to be found a quite considerable amount of ground cob. Believing that the cob only added bulk to the amount, and was of no nutritive value, besides having the fault of making our bread or mush unpalatable and irritating to the bowels, some one of our mess proposed that we make a sieve and sift out the coarse, innutritious parts. To this all readily agreed, and, taking a half canteen, we punctured it with a nail borrowed from another comrade, making holes by actual measurement three sixteenths of an inch square; this we used for a day or two, and at first we were all proud of ourselves—proud of our æsthetic taste and refinement. Ordway even showed symptoms of a poetic attack. During our first dinner of the sifted meal we cast refined, pitying glances at our neighbors, who were eating their unsifted meal ash cake as rude Goths or even Cave-dwellers might have eaten it; but in our “refined” sifting process we separated and lost nearly one fifth of our too scanty rations.

At the third process of sifting there could be detected upon the countenances of several of our mess a diminution of the ethereal expression to which the discovery of the sieve had given birth, and the hungry countenance of Nattie as he saw our ration of ground corn diminished by the little pile of coarse cob sifted from it, bore a decidedly human, matter-of-fact, hun-



gry look, and in spite of our self-pride the expression of Nattie was contagious. None of us would admit that we were wrong in estimating the lack of nutritive value in the corn-cob sifted out ; none would assume the responsibility of going back to our Vandal food ; but somehow our sieve was only used a couple of days, and no one protested when we noticed that in our sieve every little hole punched 'by the nail was carefully closed by a little wooden plug and the half canteen returned to use again as a dipper. Our intellects could understand that the coarse cob in our meal was of no more value than its bulk of sawdust, but our stomachs were carnal, obstinate, unreasonable, and somehow undermined the reasoning faculties.

Those who had been so fortunate as to have and to have retained any money could purchase from the guards and from a so-called sutler, sweet-potatoes, melons, green-corn, peaches, peanuts, and flour bread, but for every one man who could be found with the Confederate equivalent of five greenback dollars a hundred men were there who had not a dime.

When food was wanted, a very common mode of preparing it was to boil water in our kettle and stir in meal—in other words, make meal "mush," which was the most economical method of using wood. When we made bread (?) we usually poured hot water on the meal, half-cooking it in that way, and placed

the dough in the kettle, and that upon the embers. Our fires were made of such a size that the least possible amount of heat was wasted.

It cannot with truth be urged that there was not sufficient food in the Confederacy to feed its prisoners; those who have sought to exculpate the Confederates have made such a plea, and have with truth asserted that even their armies in the field were often on half rations and no rations whatever.

The same statement was occasionally as true of the Union army, and every man who passed one year or four at the front can recall many days of scant rations. But, admitting that the large armies in Virginia, by reason of insufficient transportation, were not always well supplied, the fault was not to be attributed to scarcity of food, but to defective transportation, an excuse not valid in Alabama. Dallas County, Ala., in which Cahaba was situated, was one of the best agricultural sections of the South. Inspector-General Chandler calls attention to this fact in his report of October 16th, 1864, from which I have quoted above, and garrulous Planter Hatcher again and again called my attention to the abundance of food growing within our vision, and the unlimited resources of the South in that direction, as he guarded us back after our escape.

It was remarkable, the various common and strange and unhallowed dishes evolved from our coarse corn-

meal. I have heard Remenyi play upon a single string of his violin, but with us were a hundred "artists," who with corn-meal could eclipse in their own way the marvellous feats of Remenyi, and, more remarkable still, the genius they possessed was never even suspected until they had been for a time the unwilling guests of Colonel Jones. Brownd in a skillet it became the basis for "coffee" or "tea;" it was fried in grease and boiled in water, mixed with the bacon and mixed with beef. It was sifted and the refuse soaked for days, and then all the possible changes rung upon this production. It was soaked in water till soured and then appropriated the name of "corn beer."

A different name was given to every different shade and taste, and a nomenclature of unsavory names—names without precedent—was one of the peculiarities of our cook-yard.

But prepare our corn-meal and bacon as we would, or our beef even when it could be eaten, they were not sufficient in quantity to drive away the sensation of ravenous hunger which so much of the time was gnawing at our vitals and tormenting the hours of day and night. During the day the mind could be occupied, wheedled away into the consideration of other subjects; but at night it returned again and again to a remembrance of the cause of its uneasiness. Most of the boys about us told of being tan-

talized in sleep by food coming near them and then eluding their grasp; in this my experience was different from theirs, and was quite peculiar.

I had entered the prison in the most vigorous health, and blessed with an appetite that made no discrimination among foods that were edible. Like the rest, I divided my day's ration into equal parts, consuming them one in the morning, the other in the afternoon; but as soon as I had gone to sleep I nearly always began to dream of being at home, and as soon as I would enter the house I at once went to the pantry and began to eat.

Oh, what delightful lunches I used to get in those dream journeys to the home pantry! Everything I ate tasted natural. Everything was of the most delightful flavor. In my dreams I was often surprised at the enormous quantities I ate; and though it seemed to somewhat allay my hunger, I often thought it strange that I could not feel fully satisfied.

Among men who had entered the prison in health, it seemed almost the rule for them to dream of food; but I never heard one mention of having his hunger allayed by food eaten in dreamland.

After what seemed to be hours passed in eating, I would awake with all my hunger still remaining; and it was impossible to go to sleep again until something was introduced into the stomach to allay the gnawing.



So in the darkness I would go to the water-barrel and drink, cheating the poor stomach into the belief that its demands were being complied with; but the fraud perpetrated upon it was always discovered before the forenoon meal.

So long as health remained, for several months the same experience was often repeated: go to the bed of sand at nine P.M., dream of food till one or two A.M., awake, go to the water-barrel, drink, and return to sleep again, if the rats would permit sleep.

Rats were a source of much annoyance to us who slept upon the ground. Hardly would I get asleep when one or more would be snuffing about some portion of my body. If away from my head and hands they gave me much less disturbance; but when two or three were determined to see what was under my neck, and if an obstruction was met proceeded to remove it with their paws or teeth (even though it should be my flesh), sleep was an utter impossibility.

At first they made me "nervous," lest they should do me serious injury before I should awake; but after several nights' experience that feeling was supplanted by one of irritation—irritation that they should keep waking me up so many times during the night, an annoyance that at length became nearly unendurable.

When I had been there about ten days I was awakened one night very easily by one digging under me.

I was lying on one side at the time, and the little torment was digging a "tunnel" under my shoulder-blade. Waiting motionless until I was fully awake, I suddenly rolled on my back and caught him fairly between my shoulders. He struggled, squealed, and fought to release himself; but grinding him between the shoulder and the ground, he was soon past the stage of aggression. Then, grasping his villainous throat between a thumb and two fingers, his days of troubling respectable and peaceably inclined prisoners were at an end.

I mention the "plague of rats" only to fill out the picture of real life at Cahaba. Our experience with the rodents was not excessively repugnant to us after we became accustomed to it, but was one of a multiplicity of uncanny surroundings from which there could be no escape except by exchange or death, or—worse than death—by enlistment into the Confederate Army.

The little squad captured about Tupelo and Pontotoc, to which Gere, Frazier, Bartolph, Grimes, myself, and others belonged, were all captured during the heat of midsummer, and were clothed but meagrely. Among all those just named there was not a single blanket, and I think not a man who possessed a coat. My own wardrobe on entering the prison in July consisted of a hat, shirt, pair of pants, and boots; during the escape of Grimes, Gere, and myself, all wore out our boots, and so tore our shirts upon briars and

branches, that a month or two later they could not be worn, and were thrown away.

By October 1st my wardrobe was narrowed down to a hat and pair of pants, though in early winter I became possessor of an old thin, threadbare blouse.

Sleeping in the sand without a blanket, and exposed to the sun and rain thus scantily clad, my skin became as brown and rough as the feet of children who, barefooted, have played and run in mud and sand for a whole summer.

There was another pest as persistent as hunger, more disgusting than rats—a pest that crawled upon our clothing by day, that crawled over our bodies, into the ears, even into the nostrils and mouths, by night.

In the whole prison I do not think there were twenty combs, and certainly I never saw a single fine-toothed comb. I had no comb—it was appropriated by Forrest's men—and I did not know a friend who had one. There was not in the whole prison, to my knowledge, a pair of scissors. A razor was an unknown article, so our hair became long and tangled. Some one occasionally obtained from without the prison a pair of scissors; but most men who wished to trim the hair and beard had recourse to a jack-knife or burned away the ends of the hair and beard by means of little firebrands and coals. These statements properly precede what we must say upon the loathsome subject of lice.

The subject fills one with disgust, and among respectable persons the bare mention of the name puts into the mind a feeling of repulsion and loathsomeness. Persons who have for a lifetime been surrounded by the neatness and comforts of home life can hardly comprehend that any except the scum of society should bear upon their persons these insignia of degradation and filth.

These vermin were in the prison when we entered it; and as Castle Morgan had been used for a prison for many months, doubtless all who had been there confined had had the same experience as ourselves. Even the sand, warmed by the sultry summer's sun, swarmed with the crawling pests; and any person who lay down, sat down, or stood within the prison grounds during the warm, oppressive weather was sure to become conscious of their loathsome presence.

It is nearly an impossibility to give a true picture of Southern prison life, with its sad, unpleasant features, except by entering into the details of every-day life, and from that only a dim outline is formed. The feature of which I write is one that many persons shrink from presenting to their hearers, feeling that a certain odium will attach to themselves should they state the truth in regard to it.

I trust that any who may read these pages will observe that, with the want of facilities in our Southern prisons, it was an impossibility for even the scrupu-



lously neat to keep themselves free from the disgusting vermin.

The plague of lice visited upon an ancient people could hardly have been much worse than was our condition. No Aaron had stretched forth his hand and changed the dust to lice, but the result was the same. One day one of our mess washed his shirt, and to kill all animal life that might be present, he put it into a bucket and poured upon it an abundance of hot water. Shortly after he went to his bed of sand and lay down to rest. A half hour later, conscious that he was again infested, he took care to count the number that had crawled upon the garment from the sand in that short time, and counted sixty-nine. How many had journeyed onto his pants, hat, hair, and elsewhere upon his body, can only be guessed.

I have seen men too sick to give themselves any attention, with hair so full of lice that if the original color of the hair was black, the head of the person would be gray; and if they had scratched their bodies with their finger-nails, it would be hard to find an inch of skin free from scratches and resulting scabs and scars.

I remember numerous instances where men, reduced by disease and miserable food, would scratch the skin, especially of the head, and a small abrasion would result. To such abrasions (especially as a large number of the men had no hats) flies would be attracted, and upon the scratch would deposit their eggs. Mag-

gots in a short time would be found burrowing under the scalp, and collecting together in bodies beneath the skin, would form tumors, from which, when punctured, quantities of larvæ, from a few drops to a tablespoonful, would flow out.

I repeat, it is painful to write these facts, it is disgusting to read them ; but these pages are the true story of a prison life—the story of hardships endured by men that their country might not be wrecked.

In the report of D. T. Chandler, Lieutenant-Colonel C. S. A., Inspector-General of Prisons, dated October 16th, 1864, after stating that nearly all prisoners at Cahaba were much in need of clothing, and that nearly all were without blankets or other bedding, he continues: "A very insufficient supply of cooking utensils has been furnished them, and there are but three (3) worn-out axes for the use of the whole number, in consequence of which they are unable to prepare their rations, which are issued to them uncooked;" and earlier in the year Dr. Whitfield, Surgeon C. S. A., states: "The wood (less than one half the regulations allow) has been, when furnished at all, of either green sap pine or decayed oak from old fields." (See Report Congressional Committee.)

Lieutenant-Colonel Chandler doubtless believed that "three worn-out axes" had been furnished to the more than two thousand men in Castle Morgan at that time ; but my memory retains no recol-

lection of having ever seen an axe during all the long months of confinement there ; and the reason assigned at the time was that the possession of an axe was prohibited—was a criminal offence, and worthy of severe punishment.

How did men chop their wood and split it if we were not allowed to possess an axe? To Cahaba at one time a railroad had extended ; but at the time of which I write the road was not in operation, and quite likely had been largely torn up. A large number of railroad spikes were to be picked up by hunting for them, and a few found their way into the prison. These were to be bought at one dollar each, Confederate money. They were used as wedges, and by them wood could be split into small pieces and broken to the desired lengths. Such spikes were a luxury, and only the “millionaires” of the prison could afford such gross extravagance. Most of the “plebeians” were content to use wedge-shaped pieces of wood, which in turn became fuel when they had performed their vicarious services.

How much wood was allowed to each man for the purposes of cooking? Most of the wood was cut up the Alabama River, a distance of several miles, was thrown into the river and rafted together, towed down to the prison, taken out of the river, and divided among the thirty or more companies. A piece of wood ten feet long and six inches in diameter was an average

piece for ten men for ten days. By rare good luck we sometimes obtained more than this, even twice as much as the amount stated. Figure on this for a moment, and it will appear that the quantity of wood allowed per man was equivalent to a stick twelve inches long and six inches in diameter for ten days and that usually considerably damp and sometimes perfectly green.

Don't say this cannot be true ! It is true ; and any man who was in Castle Morgan and made any reliable notes upon the matter will verify my statement. If any man received more than the quantity I have mentioned he was more fortunate than I or any of my mess.

How could men cook their food with such small quantities of wood ? The wood was usually split into pieces not thicker than one's finger and laid in the sun to dry, or stood on end about the fire, that it might be dried by its heat. I have known men to let it lay upon the ground by the side of their bodies while sleeping, that the warmth of their bodies might serve to dry it. But such action was not conducive to health nor comfort.

Our cooking utensils were usually one, sometimes two "Dutch" ovens or kettles for ten men. As each mess of ten was usually subdivided into two messes of five each, and as each subdivision cooked twice daily, making mush or bread, frying bacon, browning meal,



making coffee, etc., it is not difficult to perceive that a single kettle was "kept hopping;" and even in the fortunate squad where there were two kettles, those useful utensils had no time to be "loafing around the throne."

## CHAPTER XVII.

“MUGGERS” AND THIEVES—A POLICE COURT FORMED  
—WILLIAM REA, A CITIZEN PRISONER, MADE POLICE  
JUDGE.

**A**MONG the captives in every place of confinement in the South were men who were human ghouls and jackals; their thoughts were always of plunder, and their acts often of rapine and violence. In Andersonville and Florence and Libby they were known as N'Yaarkers; in Castle Morgan they were called “muggers.” In civil life the mugger had usually been a “rough.” If he came from the city, his associates had been gamblers, “shoulder-hitters,” thieves, and “sports.” If he came from the country, he was often a dissipated loafer, a bully, a marauder. He had usually enlisted and deserted again and again, always under an assumed name, for the bounty paid by many towns and counties. So rare were his enlistments due to unselfish motives that they are unworthy of mention.

A few months of experience with his class rendered recruiting officers and guards more vigilant in their

supervision of him, and their eyes were never off from him until he was turned over to the regiment to which he had been assigned.

Under the restraint of rigorous martial rules in the army he became less objectionable, and in rare instances signalized himself by bravery and reckless disregard of danger; but on the march he was always at the front if anything there could be stolen, was usually at the rear if there was a prospect of battle. Having enlisted from no motive of patriotism, and the restraints of military life becoming irksome to him, he fell out from the ranks, and had few regrets when captured by the scouts of the enemy. Captivity promised him a change, and any change from the curb of soldier life was acceptable. This, in brief, was the history of a large number of the men whom we designated as "muggers."

A few days only in the larger depots for the collection of prisoners were all that was necessary to acquaint them with those who would be their natural associates, and a few days in Castle Morgan made the separate bands homogeneous; and, following the lead of those who had been longest there confined, they devoted themselves to robbing and thieving from their respectable fellow-prisoners.

In no place before had the mugger been so favorably situated for carrying on his hellish work. Within the prison there was no law, no protection, no power

to which the injured individual could appeal for justice ; his only shield was his own right arm.

The prison guards had no jurisdiction over the personal wrongs of the prisoners, or, if they could have exerted any power, never cared to do so ; their business only was to see that no man escaped.

The N'Yaarkers doubtless were so designated because so large a per cent of their numbers had been enlisted in the slums of the Empire City ; the genus adopted the name of the species. Some person, curious as to the meaning of words, may ask whence these thugs received their guttural, uneuphonious name. The average robber assaults his victim from behind ; the mugger assailed the one he would rob when standing almost face to face with him. Accepting this explanation for the origin of his cognomen, mugger would be synonymous with "facer" (mug, slang for face), one who faced his victim at the moment of assault.

Although their number was not a tithe of our whole body, they were for a time more than a match for all of us. They were organized, or at least quite well understood each other. The rest were not organized. Whenever one of their number was in any difficulty or danger, a gang of his confederates were immediately at hand to give assistance if needed. If one not of their gang had an encounter with them, he usually had to fight it out alone, unless personal



friends, whom he had known previous to his imprisonment, should come to his aid.

\* Looking back to those dreary months, and knowing what we knew in the latter part of our incarceration, it is easy to see how we could have abated the nuisance of "muggers." But it was only after many weeks of their outrages that we awoke to the real condition of affairs.

Their method of procedure was about as follows: The guard upon the stockade would announce a new lot of prisoners on an incoming boat. When these had been taken to the provost marshal's office and officially robbed and their names enrolled, they were guarded to the stockade. The cry of "fresh fish" (new prisoners) is shouted through the prison, and all gather at the gate to see the new-comers. The muggers marked their intended victims, and when the hours of darkness gave them the sought-for opportunity, they were garroted in the following manner: One of their number, usually of more than medium height, would approach the victim, standing amazed at his new surroundings. When the mugger was almost face to face with the new prisoner, he stepped to the right side of his prey, threw his own right arm across the breast of the victim, resting his hand upon the left shoulder of the new-comer; by a quick movement of his own body, he placed his back and right hip against the right shoulder, back, and right hip of

the man to be robbed ; then, bending forward, the struggling, half-choked victim is lifted almost from his feet, and is as helpless as a babe. A fellow-robber is at hand to "go through" the pockets of the half-strangled man. When everything of value has been taken from the poor fellow he is released, and with a blow sent, stunned and staggering, off into darkness, or left temporarily senseless on the ground.

One after another of the new men are thus robbed within a few days or weeks after their arrival, and ere-long a new supply of men furnish a new supply of victims for the fiends who fatten upon their ill-gotten plunder.

But robbery of the new and old prisoners was not confined entirely to the methods we have described ; the large amount of booty secured by the robbers gave them the position and influence that wealth so commonly secures to its possessors. Like some of the "money-crats" who before, during, and since that time have waxed powerful by similar proceedings, they sought more refined ways of robbery. Through the guards they procured chloroform, and carefully anæsthetizing a sleeping fellow-prisoner, would leisurely examine every pocket, and cut open any coat in which they suspected might be concealed aught that could be of value to themselves.

An attempt to chloroform and rob the sergeant of a Missouri regiment awakened the inmates of the

prison to the necessity of organizing ourselves against them, and finally led to their punishment, and to driving many from the prison by enlistment into the Confederate service.

The sergeant was an intelligent German, a member of the Fourth Missouri Cavalry, named Raymond. He had on his person when captured a valuable gold watch and chain, and twenty-five or thirty dollars in currency; the watch, chain, and fifteen dollars of his money he succeeded in secreting between the lining and outside leather of his boots. The money left in his pocket was taken from him when he was searched on entering the prison the first time.

He had been in the prison but a few weeks when the thieves succeeded in stealing the chain concealed in one of his boots, but did not obtain the watch.

For three weeks thereafter he was left undisturbed to lull his watchfulness; then a mugger who passed under the name of Thompson, and claimed to be a member of the Second Michigan Cavalry, determined to chloroform Raymond and secure the watch. Creeping cautiously to the side of the sergeant, who was sleeping upon the ground, Thompson poured chloroform upon a rag, and held it near his face. Raymond till this moment had been unconscious; but the strong fumes of the chloroform aroused him instantly, and in a second he was wide

awake and struggling with his assailant, whom he instantly recognized. As the sergeant was physically a man of more than average strength, the mugger struggled only to escape, and for that time succeeded, but on the following day was arrested by men in the prison and held until a court and police force could be organized for his trial and punishment, and for the punishment of any of his gang who might thereafter be guilty of pursuing their ruffianly course.

In Castle Morgan at that time were several men of wealth, influence, and sound judgment. One was a citizen of Macon County, Ill., a Mr. St. John; another was a sergeant of the Twelfth (?) Iowa Infantry, a man of middle age, a Freemason, who afterward, through the influence of a Confederate Masonic brother, was paroled from the prison and given the liberty of the town.

Another citizen was William Rea, a neighbor of Mr. St. John. His home was near Decatur, Ill. Comparatively young, he was one of the wealthiest farmers of his State. He owned fifty thousand acres of fine farming land in Macon and Piatt counties. His brother-in-law was Colonel Froman, of the One Hundred and Sixteenth Illinois Infantry. He was an intimate friend of General Oglesby, and was well acquainted with Lincoln, Grant, Logan, and Yates—a strong phalanx of Western men. His instincts were



right, and his associations had been with those who had added strength to a character by nature strong. He had been captured in the latter part of June on a train near Dalton, Ga.

The husband of his sister, Colonel Froman, had died in a hospital in Chattanooga in June, and to send his body home for burial, Mr. Rea had gone to that city. The object of his visit accomplished here, he started for Sherman's army to see his two boys. One of these had enlisted, at the age of sixteen, in the Thirty-fifth Illinois; the other, at fourteen, a few months later, had shouldered a musket in the One Hundred and Sixteenth. His great heart was with the Union cause, and his only children able to bear arms were unhesitatingly given for its success. A band of guerillas between Dalton and Resaca wrecked the train, and all on board were made prisoners. When aroused to the necessity of organizing a court and a police force, Mr. Rea was at once by acclamation selected as judge. A man named Marvin, said to have been a law student in Milwaukee, was chosen prosecuting attorney, and a red-headed shyster-like thief, who was regarded by many of us as a confederate of the muggers, volunteered to act as an attorney for the defence. A tall, black-haired, resolute athlete named Andrew Conn, a member of the Third Kentucky Cavalry Regiment, was chosen sheriff, and several others were appointed

to different offices connected with the court and police.

The trial resulted in finding Thompson guilty of attempted robbery, and the court sentenced him to be chained each night to a large log of sawed timber, in the prison, from sundown till sunrise.

In a recent letter from Raymond, he states that Thompson was confined for a week or two ; that he by that time succeeded in sawing his chain in two, robbed a new-comer, and soon after went out of prison forever. Certain it is that Thompson had "friends at court," as several of the men who were on the police force were known to be in sympathy with the ruffians.

In going out of the prison, it was doubtless for the purpose of enlisting in the Confederate Army. A man who was connected with Thompson was also tried and sentenced to wear for a time across his back a board having the word "thief" painted on it.

Our court had frequent sessions until some time in the latter part of September or October, when a special change took place, in which Mr. Rea was included, when his departure, with several other circumstances, led to its abandonment for a remedy equally good, which will be mentioned elsewhere.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

ANDREW J. CONN, THE SHERIFF—A SKETCH OF HIM-  
SELF AND FAMILY—PAT KELLY—"PERRY"—  
TOM HASSETT—THE SPECIAL EXCHANGE.

A FEW paragraphs should be devoted to the sheriff, Andrew Conn. His history, like that of many others confined with us, especially the men who came from the border slave States, was one of tragic interest. He was reared in Garrard County, Ky., and belonged to a family who were from the beginning pronounced Unionists. A story was current in prison that between the Conn family and another residing in their neighborhood a feud, due to their differing political convictions, originated, which at length led to almost annihilation of both families. While that rumor was incorrect, it was true that the father and two brothers of Andrew were shot, the brothers dying almost instantly, the father living three or four years, his death in part due to his wound.

In each case their wounds were received either in the defence and protection of the weak, or in an effort

to pacify a furious person, and in neither case were the victims the originators of or culpably concerned in the origin of the broils.

Conn was a noble fellow in his dealings with all, with no bravado. Fear was an emotion he never experienced. No man more competent for the position of sheriff could have been found in Cahaba, and so far as duties rested with *him*, they were faithfully performed; but unfortunately several men were by some means appointed his lieutenants who were the boon companions of the muggers.

When, in the latter part of October, three or four hundred men were sent away from Cahaba to the prison at Meridian, Miss., Conn was sent with them, and shortly after his arrival there with four others escaped, was recaptured, escaped again, and reached the Union lines after several weeks. Ten or a dozen years later, while living in Madison County, Ky., he was assaulted by a drunken marauder, and to save his own life shot his assailant. The wounded man before his death exonerated Conn, and a grand jury fully acquitted him of any crime.

Although Conn treated the parents of his assailant with marked kindness, even contributing to their physical wants, the spirit of revenge lurked in their breasts, and less than a year after the son attempted his life, Conn was murdered by the father.

Poor Conn! that he deserved a better fate would be



the involuntary expression of every honest man among our numbers who knew him.

Besides the judge and sheriff, there were appointed a police force, the chief of which was Pat Kelly, a member of the Twelfth or Thirteenth Wisconsin Infantry, and by report a deserter from the Fifth Louisiana Infantry, C. S. A. He was a vigorous, active, medium-sized, curly-haired, American-born Irishman, who, if not one of the worst of the muggers, certainly assisted them in every way possible, and never permitted a man known to have smuggled money into the prison to retain it for any length of time. In one squad of new prisoners was an Iowa man, a man who had been captured when in the service only a few months. He had been paid his monthly wages only a day or two before his capture, and had not been able to express his money home to his family. He had secreted about his person a fifty-dollar bill, and by some means the fact became known to one or two men with us, among whom was Pat Kelly.

When the information was given to Kelly, my informant narrates that he manifested an uncommon interest. "Watch me t' night, me b'y," he exclaimed; "see me go through th' galoot;" and night had scarcely drawn its dark mantle over our abode of misery, when the poor Iowa countryman had been robbed of his treasure and knocked sprawling among a lot of sleeping comrades. Another objec-

tionable character was "Perry," a gross, flabby, red-headed, knock-kneed brute of a fellow, who had deserted from a Confederate regiment, and enlisted in the Third Kentucky Cavalry. He always had an abundance of money so long as new prisoners were sent to Castle Morgan. I thought it strange that he did not enlist in the Confederate Army in the winter of 1864 and 1865, when so many of his pals enlisted; for at that time I was not aware that he was a deserter; but later facts made it evident. He deemed it far safer to remain in the dense crowd than to expose himself to the risk of detection outside. When, in the spring of 1865, we were in Demopolis, Ala., going for exchange to Vicksburg, I noticed Perry among our numbers. No new prisoners had been sent to Cahaba for three or four months previous, and the exchequer of Perry had run low. His pants were badly frayed at the bottom, his knees were exposed through great holes, and a long rent extended through the seat from front to back, which his short, ragged blouse failed to conceal. While we were drawn up in line in the middle of the street waiting for orders, quite a body of the women of the place gathered on the sidewalk in front of us, and made many jeering remarks upon our mean and squalid appearance.

Their tantalizing words fell upon the ears of Perry, and for once his vulgar instincts seemed to have found a legitimate field for manifesting themselves.

Narrowly watching the guard, that his indecent act might not be observed by them, he feigned weariness, and half sat down. It was only a few moments when every tormentor there had observed him, and, with faces scarlet with anger and shame, they fled from the spot.

Among our prisoners at Cahaba was a smooth-faced, handsome boy, a gun-boat man belonging to the monitor Chickasaw, who had been captured while on shore near Morganzie Bend, La. His eyes were large and full, his face round and ruddy, and his manner pleasant and captivating. A friend of the boy—a Kentuckian named Will Cayton—knowing the gullibility of Perry, and his infatuation for the society of ladies, imposed upon Perry, in strict confidence, the statement that the young gun-boat man was a girl in disguise, and for weeks the boy, who was informed of the fraud, was the recipient of numerous gifts and more numerous smiles from his uncouth admirer, his reticence and coyness when speaking with Perry only adding to the ardor of his suitor.

While we were in Demopolis, at the time mentioned above, Perry, although ragged, was not entirely penniless. Either by robbery or by gambling he had obtained enough of money to supply himself with the vile alcoholic liquor sold there, and, in company with one of the non-commissioned Confederate officers, had visited a drinking-room. Here, half crazed by

the "fire water," and emboldened by the fact that we were going on parole to our own lines, he became boisterous, and perhaps incautiously betrayed his identity; certain it is, he attracted the attention of some Confederate officer before returning to our body. George W. Culp, of Fawn, Kan., relates that shortly after his return to our men, then camping for the night in an old warehouse, while Culp and Perry were standing conversing near the entrance of the building, a Confederate officer came to the door and addressed Perry, calling him not Perry, but Hogan. The officer ordered Perry to follow him.

Twenty minutes later, after satisfying himself of his identity, Perry was shot dead by the Confederate, and his body kicked into the Tombigbee River. Two shots in quick succession were plainly heard by the men in the warehouse, and probably were those that sent the miserable wretch into eternity. Let us hope his existence beyond the dark river was not more sin-beclouded than while with us. Had he been recognized and executed months before it would have been a blessing to many of his victims in Cahaba.

Tom Hassett was another individual prominent in the mugger gang. But little more than a boy in age, he was old in crime, loud in speech, utterly regardless of the rights of others, cruel and savage in his assaults upon the weak, and treacherous and tiger-like in attacking his physical equals. He was hated and



feared by nearly every respectable inmate of the prison. On one occasion an invalid was sent into the prison who was convalescing from a severe attack of erysipelas of the head and face; weak and faint, he had just drawn his ration of the coarse meal, and was making preparation to cook it when Hassett snatched a large portion of it and walked away.

Our sturdy, manly "judge," William Rea, chanced to observe the whole affair, and stepping forward, his face black with indignation, ordered the meal to be returned to the invalid. Hassett was not the person to cower before an ordinary man, and in a moment the two were engaged in a fierce fight. The convalescent, ashamed to have an unknown stranger fighting his battles, approached the combatants, evidently with the intention of assisting Rea, when he was set upon by one of the pals of Hassett; another prisoner, in attempting to save the invalid from harm, found himself assaulted by two or three muggers, and on these in turn several men from our number sprang like angry mastiffs. In two minutes from the time Rea determined to champion the cause of the weak man, a dozen or twenty men were pounding, kicking, biting, and bruising each other with all their power. My interest was chiefly for the victory of Rea, and to his struggle most attention was given. Hassett was the better pugilist—next after robbery that art had been his chief aim—but the Illinois citizen was a formid-

able adversary, and sent many a resounding blow and thump against the side and into the face of Hassett, and kicked him viciously in the side. When the affair was over, the bullying thief found himself much the "worse for wear," and for many days went about stiffened and sore.

The pen pictures of Perry, Kelly, and Hassett need only be duplicated to describe Pat Ponsonby, John Collins, Jack Mallett, and dozens of others whose names will be recalled with detestation by the survivors of Castle Morgan.

Mr. Rea was a fluent public speaker, and at all times ready to encourage the despondent and downcast men who were his associates. On July 4th, shortly after his entrance into the prison, he delivered a ringing speech that is remembered by every man there; and several times after, when unfavorable news—rumors of the defeat of our army—was brought in to us, and many of our men were sad with the possibility, Mr. Rea would be called upon by those of us who loved to hear his strong, reasonable, patriotic words. In conversation and in argument he was earnest, forcible, and quick to attack a weak point in the armor of an opponent, as is illustrated by an anecdote of him told by one who was captured at the same time and brought to Cahaba with him.

A day or two after his capture the little band of Unionists were placed in charge of a Confederate

guard commanded by a red-headed, red-whiskered, quick-tempered officer who delighted to bully and badger his captives. Recognizing Rea as an outspoken abolitionist (he was born and reared in Ohio), he ridiculed his regard for the rights of the negro, and asserted that "niggers were only a species of the baboon." A few minutes later he spoke of the kindly care extended to them and the paternal watchfulness of masters over their wards; asserted there were many black boys on the plantation of his father whom he regarded almost like brothers. "Why," said he, "I have two children by a slave girl, and I'd kill any blank Yankee who would harm that girl or her pickaninnies." Hardly had the words passed his lips when Rea raised his hands in feigned astonishment—"What, lieutenant! What, children by a baboon! How could you!" For a moment the lieutenant was dumb; then, conscious of the sharp ridicule he had merited, and unable to reply to the cutting words of his captive, he levelled his pistol at Rea, and exclaimed, "Shut up, you —— Yankee —— ——, or I'll blow you to h— in a minute." But the red-headed lieutenant avoided any further discussion with his citizen prisoner upon the subject of negroes.

It was mentioned above that Mr. Rea owed his release from Castle Morgan to a special exchange; and, to give a clearer idea of the causes that led to

this special exchange, it will be necessary to go back to the military operations of West Tennessee during the latter portion of the preceding summer.

After the battle of Tupelo, Miss., in which the Confederate forces were defeated, the Union general, A. J. Smith, returned to Memphis, recruited his men for a few weeks, and, with a stronger force, was ordered to hunt up the command of Forrest and engage it in battle. Forrest, however, planned differently; knowing that the departure of the army under Smith from Memphis had weakened that post, he took three thousand picked troops and started toward it. The people of Mississippi were the friends of Forrest, and did not betray his movements to the Union troops. Forrest himself knew every mile of the country of Northern Mississippi and West Tennessee, especially in the vicinity of Memphis. He had been a slave-trader in Memphis before the war. The signboard of his slave market was at that time daily read by hundreds of Northern soldiers. With the advantage of friendly citizens, and an intimate knowledge of the locality, he approached Memphis without recognition on the morning of the 21st, just as day was breaking; his troops rushed past the Union picket-posts, and before the Northern troops could be dressed and formed in line, he was in the heart of the city. His object was not to fight; he had no intention or hope of permanently holding the place. His only



object was to capture, if possible, General Washburn and his staff, and such others as could be seized, with little loss to himself. Another object was to pillage the stores of neutral and Northern merchants. His men came away loaded with plunder; he captured several of Washburn's staff and a few score of others, and nearly succeeded in securing the person of Washburn himself.

Immediately on entering the city a body of Confederates hastened to the headquarters of Washburn. The Union general had been awakened barely in time to escape from his sleeping-room, and the Confederates carried away as trophies a suit of clothing belonging to him.

Washburn had superseded General S. A. Hurlbut as commander of the Department of West Tennessee, and Hurlbut learned of the capture of his successor's wearing apparel with grim satisfaction.

"I was removed from Memphis," said Hurlbut, "because I could not keep Forrest out of West Tennessee. The department commander who succeeded me could not keep Forrest out of his bedroom."

The prisoners resulting from Forrest's Memphis raid were in Cahaba by September 1st. Among them were the headquarter clerks and other *attachés* of Washburn, the band of the Eighth Iowa Infantry, and a few non-commissioned officers, private citizens, etc. Washburn was anxious to have his

clerks back as early as possible, and at once began negotiations for their exchange. Several weeks passed, however, before arrangements for the exchange were completed. Those weeks were the halcyon days of Castle Morgan. The band sang patriotic and sentimental songs nearly every night. Mr. Rea was with us, and often spoke words of cheer—the strong words born of knowledge and hope—to the men who were about him. Our captivity was yet so brief we had not learned its hopelessness. The summer's fierce, oven-like heat in the close stockade was passing away, and the cold, wet, shivering days of winter had not yet arrived. The capacity of the old warehouse was estimated at five hundred to six hundred, and not more than double that number had yet been placed therein. Compared with a few weeks later, we had a superabundance of room.

Word came one day that probably the clerks of Washburn would be granted a special exchange; four or five months previous I had been detailed for a short time, while our regiment was dismounted, as a clerk for Colonel Hepburn (now Member of Congress from Iowa). When the work of Hepburn was finished, I was urged by the chief clerk of General Washburn to take his place as such. The able-bodied men who sought or accepted the positions of luxury and safety to be found about military

camps were regarded by the "men in the trenches" as effeminate and sadly wanting in the nobler qualities of manhood. By few was this view accepted with less question than by me, and the "soft place at headquarters" was declined. The possibility of a release from Castle Morgan even at that early period was a matter to be much dwelt upon; but dwelling upon the matter brought only the reflection, "It might have been;" and we saw the clerks go forth from the prison with little change in our views regarding the able-bodied men who sought or accepted a position that enabled them to "loaf around the throne."

The exchange was not confined entirely to head-quarter clerks. Some men who had been captured elsewhere were so fortunate as to be enumerated in the list called out for passage to our lines, and among these were Mr. Rea and Henry St. John, the old gentleman named elsewhere.

St. John had gone South to recover the body of a widow's son, and was captured and held as a hostage for Southern citizens in Northern prisons. Both Captain Henderson, the Commissioner of Exchange, and Mr. St. John were members of the Masonic fraternity. One day Captain Henderson entered the prison, when St. John arrested his attention, and gave the hailing sign of distress.

Among the friends of Captain Henderson confined

in Northern prisons was a Captain Sharp of a Georgia militia company, at that time held at Camp Chase, O. Henderson proposed to St. John that an exchange of Captain Sharp for St. John be effected, and took him to Memphis with the understanding that he should be given forty days to bring about such an exchange; but should he fail to secure the release of Sharp, he must return to Memphis and deliver himself again into the hands of the Confederates. This arrangement between Henderson and St. John was approved by General Washburn, and adding his Masonic oath to his parole of honor, St. John hastened northward. His first stopping-place was at Camp Chase, where he acquainted Captain Sharp of the efforts to be made for his release, and where he hoped the transaction could be effected speedily. Here his efforts were futile; then he went to Washington and besieged that stanch patriot, that fiery-tempered man whose anxiety for the maintenance of the Union and whose confidence in his own opinion and ability was so great that he would, if possible, have carried on the war entirely alone, that human "bear with a sore head," Secretary Stanton. Here, too, as was to be expected, he failed. Then, after three weeks of delay, he was permitted to appeal personally to the soft heart in "Father Abraham's" bosom, and, as was to be expected, he succeeded. When the forty days had nearly passed, Colonel Henderson found his



friend Sharp at Black River, near Vicksburg, comfortably clothed, and his passage paid by St. John.

A son of William Rea informs me that he secured his liberty only by bribing one of the Confederate officers. To the Confederate officer he gave all the ready cash he could spare from his own purse and all he could borrow from the pauper crowd with which he was associated. In addition to this, he promised to deed to the officer's wife, then residing in Western Kentucky, three hundred and twenty acres of his land. For his release also two Confederates were to be sent South. When Rea arrived in Memphis General Burbridge told him the two men surrendered for him were persons very much desired by the Confederates, and very reluctantly given up by the Federals on account of their objectionable history.

Rea was recognized as a strong man, admired, loved fervently by his political friends, and hated by his political adversaries.

Reaching his home near Decatur, Ill., a few days after his release, he was requested to deliver an address in Power's Hall in that city. His utterances upon that occasion are recalled by the old residents of Decatur as among the most thrillingly patriotic of the many remembered through the long period that has since elapsed.

It may interest the survivors of Cahaba to know that our stanch companion met with his death

in 1878 as the result of an accident. While riding a stumbling horse, horse and rider were thrown to the ground. In the fall he was severely stunned by striking upon his head. For a few days he pursued his usual business, complaining at all times of an uncomfortable headache. He at length decided to consult his family physician, and while stepping from a car on his way to his medical attendant, clapped his hand to his forehead, and exclaiming to some friends with whom he had been in delightful conversation for the previous half hour, "Oh, my God, gentlemen—" fell before the sentence was finished, and was dead in a few minutes.

Among those who were so fortunate as to be enumerated in this special exchange was a young man captured at Memphis during the raid of General Forrest, named Pope. He went with his comrades as far as Jackson, Miss., where he was taken sick, died, and was buried. His father, a fairly well-to-do citizen of Quincy, Ill., set on foot measures to recover his body. From our own officials he received the promise of an ambulance, and from Confederate authorities he was promised the ordinary courtesies of a civilian engaged in such an undertaking. A young man named Ira Pitney, a friend of the father, was just ready to start from Vicksburg for Jackson, when the Confederate agent of exchange, Colonel Watts, who had previously assured them of his consent and

assistance, demanded and received five hundred dollars before Pitney could enter Confederate territory. A draft was made on the father through a Vicksburg bank, and this was paid by the father of young Pope. (From Report of Congressional Committee.)

The departure of Mr. Rea interrupted the sessions of our court; but as the "mugger" element among our police in a measure neutralized the power of the "judge," the abolition of the court was not deeply felt.

## CHAPTER XIX.

A NEW ARBITER — A DESIRABLE AUTOCRAT — “BIG TENNESSEE” — HIS COLLISION WITH THE MUGGERS — A THORN IN THEIR FLESH.

WE were not left long, however, without a remedy for our ills and evils. While we were considering how best to secure justice in spite of Pat Kelly's crew and the manifest advantage they possessed as the recognized police force, several hundred new prisoners were brought in, among whom was a Tennessean of enormous size and power.

When the rebel General Hood started North from Atlanta, he encountered Union troops at several places, and at some unimportant post succeeded in capturing the Third Tennessee Cavalry Regiment, to which our young giant belonged.

The mugging outrage was carried out with these men as with so many others. But one of the men who had been robbed remembered those who had garroted him, and on the following morning singled them out and went for his gigantic friend—“Big Tennessee” was the name we bestowed upon him.



His true name was George Pierce. In height he was as near seven feet as six ; his arms seemed a foot longer than those of an ordinary sized man, and were large, muscular, and hard. His chest and shoulders were enormous, even for a man of his gigantic dimensions. The muscles of his neck brought to mind old pictures of gladiators. But with all his physical power, his manner was that of one of the mildest of men. Indeed, he seemed an overgrown boy, who would be too timid to defend his own rights, let alone the possibility of being the champion of the rights of others. Such an opinion the muggers formed of him.

The young man who had been so roughly handled the preceding night returned to his assailants and demanded the return of this property. With an air of injured innocence they denied having ever seen him before, and, on being pressed further, threatened to punish him if he did not go away.

Then "Tennessee" approached nearer, apparently as a mere spectator who, in passing, had for the first time heard of any disagreement. As their words became hotter, he mildly took sides with the newcomer. Of the muggers there were three or four ready to assist each other, and they were only waiting a moment that in concert they might the more easily inflict brutal punishment upon the man who would dare to accuse them of being robbers.

If they surround him who sought redress, he is as helpless as a child. One will give him from behind a stunning blow, and ere he can recover from its effects, another will kick his feet from under him, another will jump with rough boots upon his upturned face, and in a moment he is senseless from the brutal blows and kicks of these men—these fiends.

The words of "Tennessee" are interpreted by them as a meddling with their affairs that cannot and will not be tolerated. They look up and see a tall, gawky, mild-looking, overgrown boy. They have been the thugs and shoulder-hitters of a great city. There they have learned that great odds are in favor of him who has given his adversary an unexpected, staggering blow. Springing with the quickness of a tiger, hissing out, "D—n you, take that for your meddling with what is none of your business," one of the rascals struck with all his power at the neck of "Tennessee," while another aimed a blow at his left side.

Neither blow went where intended. They had counted him a green country boy, who could be sent sprawling upon the earth with the bellow of an injured calf. He was a mountain lion in human form—an athlete who could deal with these men as with little children.

When he found himself beset so savagely, with the quickness of a flash his left hand flew backward and one assailant fell quivering to the earth, nearly knock-

ing over some men standing behind him. His brawny right fist, like the kick of a fiery horse, was sent into the face of Number 2, and he was senseless for many minutes, and bruised and mangled for weeks.

Two others were before him; he caught each by his long hair, and after bumping their heads together a moment, lifted them bodily from the ground, slammed them together with great violence, and flung them at full length upon the earth.

There was no "fight" left in the gentlemen he had so roughly handled. Sick, faint from the terrible shock each had received, they slowly arose and walked away, or were assisted to depart by their confederates. None others offered to give him battle. Those who had seen the evidence of his prowess would as soon attack a catapult or an enraged elephant.

In a few minutes "Big Tennessee" relapsed into the awkward, good-natured boy, and, with his friend, returned to his part of the prison.

A change came over the muggers. From being a gang of abusive, bullying, brutal thugs, they changed to a glowering set of rascals, who, when the name of "Big Tennessee" was mentioned, had little desire to boldly appropriate the scant property of their fellow-prisoners.

In an hour half the boys in the prison had heard that "Tennessee" had whipped some of the muggers. Many who had not heard the particulars

felt that the reign of terror was at an end, and from that time forward if any bully was inclined to invade the rights of his fellow, the wronged person had only to convince our giant of the justice of his cause, when, with no fuss and few words, his wrongs were righted, if it were possible for them to be.

On one occasion I sought the good offices of our common friend for a poor sick Ohio boy who had been robbed of his wood by a pirate. I had noticed the sick fellow trying to cook some mush from the coarse corn-meal. He left his little fire for a short time to go to another part of the prison, and on his return the little pile of wood he had left had been carried away by a brawny brute who, however, had been observed by another near by. The invalid, on his return, asked what had become of his wood, and learned who the thief was. He wanted to know of him why he had taken it away, and was, with an oath, told to "get away or he would mash him." I called the sick boy to me, and told him to wait until I could bring "Big Tennessee." "Tennessee" was cooking his breakfast at the time, but willingly went with me. In company with the emaciated, scrawny Ohioan, "Tennessee" walked up to the pirate and said, "You have taken this sick boy's wood; give it back to him."

"I haven't seen any of his wood. The wood I got over there belonged to one of my chums."



"Look here, we don't want any trouble here. Here, Ohio, pick up your wood and take it back." At the same moment our peacemaker placed his enormous hand on the shoulder of the thief. The latter looked as though he could commit a murder with half an opportunity, but did not stir to prevent the boy taking the wood. The "strong arm of the law" was near at hand.

When "Ohio" had returned to his mush, "Tennessee" turned his puny antagonist half way round, and remarked, "It will be very unhealthy for you to try on any more such little tricks." This sententious advice was all that Pierce usually deemed necessary to give.

At another time some of Pat Kelly's friends ill used a poor fellow who had not been able to get up from his little nest in the sand. To give the color of reason for having abused the boy, they asserted that he was dirty and lousy, and should be washed then and there. The invalid could scarcely stand; to be sure, he was dirty and lousy; so was every one else there. They dragged him to the water, and though the day was cold and cloudy in late fall, they took sand and cold water and began to scrub him, at the same time tearing off his scanty rags.

Immediately "Tennessee" was called. Coming up to Pat Kelly, who was by this time one of the

chief actors in the scene, he said, "Mr. Kelly, you can't abuse that boy; don't you interfere with him any more. Boy, put on your clothes and go back to your bed if you want to." That was enough. Pat Kelly "let himself down" as best he could, and the invalid returned to his burrow.

"Tennessee" never had but the one fight while in prison; that was so decisive that further demonstrations of his muscle were never desired; and thereafter no mugger ever wished to go contrary to his command or suggestion. When we were ordered into the south end of the prison to be counted the next morning, a Kentucky boy whose nest was by the side of the invalid told me he had died during the night. "He would have died in a day or two, I guess, but the sand and cold water didn't help him any."

Shortly after the Presidential election, in November, special efforts were made by the Confederates to enlist men from our numbers, and at that time nearly all of the worst muggers went out of the stockade into the Confederate service.

It was the opinion of many good observers that the influence of "Big Tennessee" made a longer stay in his presence most hateful to them. Pierce probably lost his life by the explosion of the *Sultana*.

## CHAPTER XX.

COLONEL HOWARD HENDERSON, THE COMMISSIONER OF EXCHANGE—COLONEL SAMUEL JONES, COMMANDER OF THE PRISON—A COWARD AT VICKSBURG—CASHIERED AND SENT TO CAHABA TO COMMAND CASTLE MORGAN.

**I**N these memoirs of Cahaba a prominent place should be given to Captain (later Colonel) Howard A. M. Henderson.

Colonel Henderson entered the Confederate service, from Kentucky, as a captain of the Colonel Clay Cadets. For a time he was in field service, then was sent to take charge of the prison at Cahaba. Here he was promoted, and appointed Assistant Commissioner for the Exchange of Prisoners of War, and assigned to duty for the Department of Alabama, Mississippi, and East Louisiana. He had charge of the prisoners at Opelika, Macon, Cahaba, Selma, Meridian, and Enterprise, Miss. The relations of Henderson with the officers of the Union Army, as an officer connected with the exchange of prisoners, were often intimate and cordial, and by many

of the non-commissioned officers and privates he is remembered with kindly wishes. That he, however, was only human is evident to all prisoners who ever read an article written by him on the relative death-rate of captives in Northern and Confederate prisons. In the article referred to, we are told that many great hospitals in time of peace could duplicate the pictures of the men sent North from Confederate prisons, and this, too, where the patients have had the best of care. This is a mode of reasoning that may properly be called sophistry. It would have us infer that prisoners in the Confederate "pens" were as tenderly cared for as patients in great metropolitan hospitals in time of peace.

A very fair hospital was said to have been in Cahaba. This statement is not doubted; but even as early as October, 1864, when our prison was less crowded than later, the Confederate surgeon in charge complains of the number of "wounded and very sick prisoners confined in the stockade because there was no room for them elsewhere." (See Report D. T. Chandler, Lieutenant-Colonel C. S. A., in Congressional Report on Treatment of Prisoners.)

In the same article are other statements which any person well informed upon the subject will challenge, but the many kindly deeds performed by Colonel Henderson for Federals forefends him in the matter.



When the forces of Forrest dashed into Memphis in August, 1864, and narrowly missing General Washburn, seized upon his uniform and watch, these articles were recovered from the captor, and, through Colonel Henderson, returned to their original proprietor. To return the courtesy, the staff officers of Washburn sent to Colonel Henderson a fine uniform; and at the close of the war General Washburn gave to the Confederate Officer of Exchange a certificate of his courtesy and kindness to Federal captives.

It was often in the power of Henderson to extend kindnesses and courtesies to prisoners, and we are glad to note that the opportunity was not infrequently embraced. On one occasion Spaulding, a lieutenant-colonel of an Ohio regiment, resigned from military service and became a cotton speculator. As such he was captured and carried to Cahaba. In his young manhood Colonel Henderson had been a student at Delaware, O. (Ohio Wesleyan University), where Spaulding had also studied at the same time. Recognizing Spaulding as a classmate in other years, he took him to his home in Cahaba, and much ameliorated his condition from that of the average paroled prisoner. At length, revealing his identity to his captive, he arranged for his exchange, and also for the exchange of a younger brother, who was in Castle Morgan. The two brothers were sons of the Hon. Z. Spaulding, at that time a Member of

Congress from the Cleveland, O., district. As soon as the war had ended Congressman Spaulding, grateful for the service rendered him in the release of his sons, secured the passage of an amnesty bill relieving Colonel Henderson of all political disabilities.

Another incident illustrating the pleasant relations of Colonel Henderson with the officers of our army is recalled in the case of Captain Poe. Poe, a descendant of the famous Indian fighter and pioneer, a giant in size, was captured, with others, at Sulphur Trestle, Tenn., and carried to Enterprise, Miss. When arrangements had been made for the exchange of this body of officers they left Enterprise and started toward Memphis. On the first night of the journey the captives, with Colonel Henderson, stopped at Canton, Miss. The feet of Poe were naked and in such a condition as to render locomotion almost impossible, unless some protection for them could be obtained. On the way to Canton, Henderson had become interested in the huge Yankee, partially on account of his ancestor, and soon after their arrival at Canton the Confederate colonel asked his gigantic prisoner to go with him, as he wished to present him with a pair of shoes. The feet of the captain were not smaller in proportion than his body, and, after searching several stores, only a pair of plantation brogans (russets) could be found large enough to encase his "foundations."

Large as were the russets, their price was larger, and three hundred and sixty dollars in depreciated Confederate scrip was paid by Henderson for them.

On the arrival of the grateful captive in Memphis he asked and received permission of the post commander to take the colonel about town for a short time. His first visit was to a clothing house, where he compelled his new friend to accept of a fine black military overcoat as a token of his esteem.

Among the men who were paroled and permitted to remain outside of the prison was a soldier of a New England regiment, whose trade was that of carriage-maker. At odd hours he constructed for the little daughter of Colonel Henderson—a little tot, who was much petted by our men “outside”—a miniature carriage. The gift brought a better acquaintance between the exchange commissioner and the captive, and, at a later period, the prisoner besought the colonel to favor his exchange at an early period. He was suffering severely from chronic diarrhœa and dysentery; he urged that his health was poor and growing worse; that if he remained for a long period in the custody of the Confederates, and under his existing anxiety, he feared his life would be soon cut short. A wife and a small family of children were waiting and tearfully watching for him in his cosy little New England home.

His pleadings were not in vain; and, though con-

trary to the advice of physicians and friends, who feared he would not be able to accomplish the foot journey that must be made by all prisoners between Jackson and Black River Bridge, he started for our lines with the next squad of exchanged prisoners. The stimulus of hope enabled him to endure the journey by rail to Jackson, but he had not marched with his comrades an hour before weakness prohibited his further progress on foot. An ambulance accompanied the train, and by the order of Colonel Henderson he was placed in this. Large armies of Confederates and Northern men had in previous years been encamped near the Black River Bridge, twelve miles east of Vicksburg, and had cut down and cleared away all timber for two or three miles on either side of the river. Before the little band of prisoners had reached the cleared space the sick man, overcome by the fatigue of the long journey, passed into a state of coma. Learning this, Colonel Henderson gave his horse to a footman and rode in the ambulance by the form of the insensible man.

On the western side of the river, upon the high bluff, and plainly visible for a long distance, a camp of Union soldiers was stationed. From a tall flag-staff at the camp headquarters the "Stars and Stripes" floated upon the gentle breeze, and was espied by the returning prisoners as they entered the eastern side of the clearing. No man knows how thrilling is



that sight until he has viewed it under the circumstances of these men. Cheer upon cheer burst from their lips, and tears of strongest emotion coursed down their cheeks ; even the unconscious man, borne in the ambulance, was aroused by the cheers and shouts of his comrades. Turning to Henderson, he asked the cause of the sudden commotion, and was kindly informed of his proximity to his own army. "Raise me up, please," he said ; "I want to see our beautiful flag." The Confederate colonel raised him to a reclining position, and supported his head upon his own breast. Gazing intently for a moment, he murmured, "Thank God ! I shall see my dear wife and babies again." A moment later he grew ashy pale, and sank lifeless into the arms of the Confederate, down whose cheeks the tears of sorrow and sympathy flowed as uncontrollably as at the death of a comrade. "One touch of nature" made these men kin.

Turning from Colonel Henderson to Lieutenant-Colonel Samuel Jones, Twenty-second Louisiana Infantry, who was in command of the prison during the greater portion of the last year of its existence, we find one whose record was a sickening blotch upon humanity. Before the war he was a bookkeeper in a large New Orleans wholesale house, and remained there until conscription forced into the Confederate States Army every available man between the ages of

childhood and senility ; then he obtained an officer's commission, and was in due time sent to the army at Vicksburg.

It was rumored among our men who were so unfortunate as to have been placed in his power that his cruelty was in some manner connected with his having deserted from the old United States Army. The rumor had no good foundation. He was never in the United States Army. At Vicksburg (a Confederate who knew him well informs me) he was guilty of the grossest cowardice, and from there was sent to command the prison at Cahaba as a cashiered officer. By what strange and malignant destiny, if there was no method in it, were cowards and cruel men so often placed in charge of the prisons for Federal captives—Winder, Beewet, Wirtz, Turner, Fitzpatrick, Jones?

The relations between Jones and Henderson were never cordial, and at times were quite unfriendly. It was urged by one or two of the guards that Jones when not drunk was less brutal than he would ordinarily seem ; but, unfortunately for the poor wretches whose very lives depended upon his moods, he was never seen by us except when intoxicated.

A son of Colonel Jones was at Cahaba a portion of the time, a captain in the Confederate service. I am told by a Confederate that the son at times expressed a dissatisfaction with the course pursued by

the parent. A regard for the law of atavism might well make him solicitous.

To J. H. Morrison, of the Seventh Wisconsin Battery, he remarked one day, "You d— Yankees will get enough of this kind of existence before you get out. If I could have my own way I would hang every devil of you."

To another prisoner, who was detailed to bury a comrade, he growled out, "I'm only sorry the d— blue-bellies are so tough—they don't die fast enough;" and to the writer of this on one occasion his words were even more cruel.

Jones was always hated and feared by the captives, and was never known to show any pity or compassion to the abject men who were under the iron heel of his authority.

A rumor has gained credence among ex-Cahabans that after the close of the war, when the arrest of poor little cowardly Wirz was made public, Jones in disguise fled from the United States and remained away for several years; then, believing, from facts that came to his knowledge, that no punishment for his crimes would be given, he returned to New Orleans, where, if he has not, within two or three years, been called to the tortures of another world to be punished for the tortures he inflicted upon others in this, he is still living.

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE GUARDS AT CASTLE MORGAN—THE MODERN RIVER  
STYX—THE AUTHOR'S LIFE SPARED BY AN OLD  
CONSCRIPT—HANKINS—HE KILLS THREE MEN IN  
SIX DAYS — “LITTLE CHARLEY” — MRS. AMANDA  
GARDNER.

THE guards on duty at Castle Morgan were largely conscripts. In October, 1864, they consisted of the trans-Mississippi battalion, two companies Alabama reserves, infantry, one company Alabama reserves, cavalry, eighteen men detailed from some other portion of the Confederate States Army, and two or more brass field-pieces (Napoleon guns).

The older men among the guards were perhaps as humane as need be expected, and several certainly were so. An atmosphere of sad seriousness enveloped the majority of these more kindly older men, and one could but feel they were depressed by forebodings and homesickness.

The first night I was in Castle Morgan (we first entered it long after nightfall), while seeking a place on the ground where I could lie down, I



unconsciously stood for several moments upon the "beat" of one of the guards stationed inside the prison. The light from the guard fire, several rods away, was extremely dim. The sentinel had been stationary before I came near his beat, and to a stranger in the place, as I was, there was nothing to indicate the existence of a dead line. Nearly all of those who slept on the ground in that part of the prison had laid down and were wrapt in slumber, or were courting the drowsy god. Standing contemplating the prospect for a moment, I felt a hand respectfully placed upon my shoulder, and turned to interrogate the intruder. A man past middle age stood before me dressed in "butternut," his gun thrown over his shoulder ; he possessed about as much of military bearing as an average small farmer whose squirrel hunt had not been successful. Pointing to the cleared space upon which I was standing, he explained, " You are over the dead line, sir ; you mustn't stand here ; 'tis against our orders." I excused myself, and explained that I had just been turned in that night, and had not yet become acquainted with the place. The phrase, " Over the dead line," was quite unfamiliar to us recent captives, and had not yet burned and blistered its terrible meaning upon our intellects ; we had not yet learned that the " dead line " was to prisoners a modern river Styx, from across which none returned with life ; but in after

months, as I saw how quickly men were despatched for the same mistake, I always considered my life to have been spared by the old man's humanity. Several instances of this character are recalled with pleasure by the men who were witnesses of them.

It were much more pleasant if a truthful history of Castle Morgan could show no wretched contrasts to the incident given above ; but in this particular the Alabama pen differed little from its kind elsewhere.

The first murder that fell under the observation of the author after entering the place was the killing of an inoffensive German who came into the prison a few days after our recapture in August. The German, who had left his small farm and home and little family in Wisconsin to battle for his adopted State (how devoted were the Teutons to the Union cause!) had arrived in Cahaba late the previous evening, and had been without supper that night or breakfast the following morning. By the middle of the forenoon he was extremely hungry. He had drawn his ration of meal, and was waiting to borrow a "skillet" in which to cook it. Although I was within a few feet of the German at the moment of the shooting and previous, I was not aware of the circumstances connected with it previous to the shooting, until they were narrated to me by a comrade who had personally observed them. That one might be within a short distance of such a tragedy before its enactment and

be unconscious of its antecedents is not remarkable when it is remembered that probably two hundred men were within a radius of a hundred feet of us.

The comrade who had been a witness of the deed stated that the German, after receiving his ration of meal, in broken English asked a guard where he could get wood to cook it. Near the stockade, on the danger side of the dead line, a stick of wood had fallen, and none of the prisoners had cared to attempt its removal. To this stick of wood the guard called the attention of the hungry man, and said, "There is wood." The new arrival, unconscious of doing anything that jeopardized his life, at once put a foot over the dead line, and leaned forward, with his back to the guard, to reach the wood. Only one foot was over the dead line, and to the guard it was evident that the man was a recent comer, unused to the rules of the prison, and unconscious of transgressing any of them. What the harmless fellow intended or did not intend was nothing to the blood-thirsty brute. He only saw a technical excuse for killing a Yankee.

In a moment his gun was at his shoulder and a bullet went crashing through the leg of the German, near the knee. All jumped away—another guard might fire into the crowd. The German lay groaning and bleeding upon the ground, the blood spurting from the opening.

After a few moments, when it was quite certain

that no more shots would be fired, I asked the guard if I might go to the German and stop the loss of blood. He gave a tardy assent, and asking him again not to shoot me, I went to the prostrate man, and taking off the belt from about my waist, twisted it tightly around his limb, and arrested the flow of blood. We took him out to the hospital, but a few days later he was laid in the ground.

One of the most savage rascals we had to guard us was a murderer named Hankins. One day a boyish soldier named "Teddy," a member of the Third Michigan Cavalry, made an arrangement with Hankins to bring him in a few sweet potatoes when next he should come on guard. Hankins was stationed that day near the gateway between the cook-yard and the sleeping-yard. As sometimes many persons collected at this gateway and impeded the passage of persons from one yard to the other, orders were given prohibiting persons from gathering in the gateway. The order was well enough, and was intended to prevent any crowd from obstructing the passage.

Teddy approached Hankins when he came on guard again, and from him received and paid for his sweet potatoes. Starting to go into the sleeping-yard, he had just got into the gateway when some friend hailed him from the outside ; without thinking where he was, he stopped for a moment and looked around.



That was an opportunity Hankins had wanted ; the face of his intended victim was turned away, and no comrade saw the danger in time to warn the boy. Raising his musket quickly to his shoulder, a big bullet was sent crashing through his body, and Teddy fell to the earth.

The wound was not immediately fatal. Some of his friends were at length permitted to go to him and carry him away. I was standing on the inside of the gateway as friends with tender hands bore him out to the hospital. The only words I heard him utter as he was borne past me were, "Boys, when you get away from here remember this." In two days Teddy was where the bullet of an assassin could do him no harm.

Two days after, in the same place, Hankins killed another man with whom but a few moments before he had been in pleasant conversation, and with whom he had not passed an unpleasant word.

In six days of that single week Hankins killed three men, and in each case there was not the least shadow of reason or excuse for the murders. By an Iowa acquaintance I am informed that "when General Wilson's cavalry captured Cahaba some of his men, who had formerly been in Cahaba prison and knew of the kindness of Mrs. Gardner toward the prisoners there, requested to be allowed to go ahead and surround Mrs. Gardner's house, to protect it and

its inmates. They also intended to capture and burn Hankins at the stake ; but on their arrival Mrs. Gardner told them that Hankins was taken sick and died a natural death in Cahaba after the prisoners left."

Another assassin was "Little Charley"—Charles Tate—a boy of sixteen years, perhaps. I was standing in the cook-yard, near the northwest corner, one morning, and Charley was on guard near by, on top of the stockade. An Iowa boy was cooking his breakfast of meal just west of me, and nearer the dead line. I was between Charley and the Iowa boy. Suddenly a prisoner near me, who had looked up, sprang away ; in the same instant the report of a gun and the whiz of a passing bullet was heard. The Iowa boy fell where he was standing ; a bullet had passed through his body, and from thence into the ground.

As soon as we dared we went to the fallen sufferer, and bore him to the place where he had been accustomed to sleep on the ground. Before he was moved some one asked him if he was over the dead line, and he answered, "No ; I was *at least* three feet inside." We looked where the bullet had struck the ground, and found *that* two feet inside the dead line, toward the prison's cook-yard, even after passing through the soldier. The murdered boy must have been more than four feet away from the nominal line of danger.

At another time several scores of men were stand-

ing in line near the gate, expecting to go outside the stockade for wood; one man in the line for some cause leaned sideways and extended his head outside the line of the column; he was giving no heed to Charley, whose post was near the head of the line; he had no cause to expect danger, as he had transgressed no order—had not overstepped the dead line; but his position arrested the attention of the little murderer, and in a moment his gun flashed at the leaning man. The eagerness of the boy to do his deadly work had made his aim imperfect, and the bullet, missing the intended victim, buried itself in the man behind him, and another was added to his list of murders.

Comrade Henry J. Kline, of Mill Grove, Ind., and others allege seeing "Little Charley" bayonet a prisoner who was passing between the cook-yard and the sleeping-yard. On that occasion two men going in opposite directions met in the gateway; one was carrying in a little pail of mush, the other was bringing out from the water barrels a cup of water. In attempting to pass each other, both turned to the same side, and stood still for a second. Perceiving them motionless for the moment, though the cause was easily apparent, the blood-thirsty guard drove his bayonet with all possible force through the body of the nearest prisoner, who in a moment was lifeless on the earth before him. How many in all Charley

killed I do not know, but I am certain of his killing three.

One day I was talking with an old conscript, who was strongly suspected of being almost a Union man by some of us who had talked with him. I had been told that Charley had been granted a furlough for his "zeal as a guard"—that is what the Confederates called it. In reply to my question whether Charley was away on furlough or not, he replied in the affirmative. "Why was he furloughed?" I asked. "I don't know," he replied, "but I heered 'twas because he was such a good soldier." "Well, say, uncle," I continued, "was he given a furlough because he killed so many prisoners?" "I guess so," said he; "that's what we uns allers heered;" and if I were to make oath to the probable truth of the statement, I certainly would state I believed Charley was furloughed *because* he had been esteemed a most vigilant guard, as was evidenced by his murderous activity.

I sometimes hear persons state that the stories of Southern prisons must be overdrawn. I read, some time since, "Andersonville," by John McElroy, late of Company L, Sixteenth Illinois Cavalry, and persons who have read that work have said they could not believe all its statements. I wish here to bear testimony that, though I read the above work with the utmost care, I read nothing that was more remarkable than what I myself have often seen or had directly



from others in our prison who were eye-witnesses to atrocities committed. It should not be understood that prison guards were fair representatives of the average Confederate soldier in the field. It is fair to presume that the majority of soldiers in the field voluntarily assumed the rôle of soldier, voluntarily remained, and no just critic will call in question their daring, their bravery, or their honesty of convictions. The prison guard, by contrast, was usually a conscript, often a stripling, bloated by his autocratic power, and more often brutal than humane. Their characteristics grew more pronounced as the length of their peculiar service increased, and their unsoldierly duties had a degrading influence upon what inborn manhood they might have originally possessed.

It is pleasant to turn now from reciting the hardships, the heartaches, the suffering and cruelties that enter so largely into the story of our military prison life, to the consideration of a character so beautiful that memory paints her a human angel. Her home was by the side of the prison, only a rod or two distant, the stockade being on the line of her side door-yard; her name was Mrs. Amanda Gardner.

At the time of our detention in Cahaba Mrs. Gardner was a woman of about fifty years of age. Her personal appearance I am unable to describe, as I never had the pleasure of seeing her. Those who met her always spoke of her as a bright, sunny

Christian woman. Her husband was an invalid, unable to enter any army, but one of her sons, a well-educated, intelligent young man of seventeen, was in the Army of Northern Virginia, and there gave up his life in some engagement. Two daughters were all I ever knew of; one, "Little Belle," a miss of eight or ten; the name of the other I never learned.

As soon as prisoners were taken to Cahaba Mrs. Gardner became deeply interested in their condition, and began ministering to their necessities. Having but a moderate amount of worldly goods, her contributions could be but meagre; but almost daily a few potatoes, peas, green beans, green corn, and other vegetables were passed through a hole in the stockade to the Union men. She possessed quite a good library of all kinds of books, and as soon as some of our men discovered it, they requested and received the loan of the volumes.

Previous to our arrival at the prison, probably during the winter of 1863-64, moved with pity at the terribly destitute condition of the men, whom she could plainly view from a chamber window, on one occasion she took bedding from her beds and even carpets from her floor and cut them up for blankets to cover the nakedness of the men and protect their bare bodies and limbs from the chill blasts of the winter. Her means of giving assistance,

even to a few, became nearly exhausted by the summer of 1864.

So long as Captain Henderson was in command of the prison no objection was ever offered to the angelic deeds of Mrs. Gardner; but a different person was his successor, Colonel Jones.

For a few weeks during the latter portion of the summer of 1864, after our entrance, frequent gifts of vegetables were passed into the prison by "Little Belle." Watching a time when a kind-hearted guard was stationed on the side of the stockade next to her yard, the little girl would bring her offerings to the hole in the stockade, the guard would call some prisoner and pass the gift to him, and one mess at least would be envied by the whole prison so long as the precious food was in sight or memory. The mess to which we belonged was never so fortunate as to be the recipients of any of these gifts, but we could not be blind to the humanity of one noble family, and their memory will be carried with the deepest reverence and love by all who were inmates of Castle Morgan.

One day an unfriendly guard observed the little girl making her daily offering, and reported her and her mother to the commander, Jones. An officer was at once despatched to interview and caution Mrs. Gardner. I was told she was formally arrested, and after that date the food offerings of

this most noble and Christian woman were debarred to us.

One of the methods of punishment inflicted upon the prisoners for their misdeeds was by "placing them on the ladder." Any violation of a prison rule for which the offender was not shot down at once might be punished by the ladder. The ladder, placed outside the stockade, in plain view from the windows of Mrs. Gardner, was of the ordinary kind, its upper end resting against, its lower several feet distant from the stockade. One of the men placed on the ladder by order of Colonel Jones was a member of my brigade, George W. Loveless, of the Seventh Illinois Cavalry. His crime was striking a prisoner who had declared his intention to take the oath of allegiance to the Confederacy. Loveless, like others sentenced to the ladder, was compelled to grasp a rung so high that only the extremities of his shoes could touch the ground; and must sustain his weight by the hands for a prescribed number of minutes; a guard was always near by to enforce the punishment.

The punishment of prisoners by placing them upon the ladder was horrifying to Mrs. Gardner, and, after being compelled to witness several examples of what she pronounced a barbarity, she boldly sought the prison commander and protested against it. "Colonel Jones," she exclaimed, "I have given up to you and your officers the best rooms of my house ;



for your comfort and convenience I have sacrificed much ; grant me one request. If you will continue to punish men in that manner, I beg of you to remove the location of punishment ; do not continue it in a place where I and my children must be unwilling spectators ; 'tis brutalizing in its influence." Just such an answer was returned to her prayer as one who knew the man would reasonably expect.

" Mrs. Gardner," he replied, " only my forbearance saves you from being sent away from your invalid husband and family of little children beyond our lines. Your sympathy for the d—— Yankees is odious to me. Now bear yourself with the utmost care in the future or you shall be an exile." Mrs. Gardner was a Southern woman by birth, education, and in sympathy ; her prayers for the success of the Confederate cause were as earnest as those of " Stonewall Jackson ;" but her noble humanity, her Christianity, would not permit her to extend to or wish her near neighbors any hardship or severity not positively necessary for self-protection.

When the war closed Mrs. Gardner, whose property in Cahaba had become worthless by the decay of the town, removed to Selma, that she might better support by her labor her little children and invalid husband ; and some time in 1883 or 1884 all that remained of the family removed to New York City. Dear, noble, kind-hearted woman, her memory is cherished

with feelings of reverence by the men who were grateful witnesses of her angelic deeds and knew her motives.

Another person who should be mentioned for her kindness was a Miss Marks, a nurse to the sick men outside. On one occasion a member of the Thirteenth Wisconsin Infantry, Alexander B. Campbell, moved by her kindness, questioned her as to the reason of it. Her answer was, "I have two brothers prisoners at Camp Douglass. I hope God will send some Northern woman to do for them, when sick, what I am pleased to do for your men."

## CHAPTER XXII.

SENT TO MERIDIAN—GERE—UNABLE TO WALK—A  
BIPED BURRO—EVERY-DAY LIFE AT MERIDIAN.

THE hot, oven-like atmosphere that was nearly always present outside of the stockade during July and August and September was much more marked within that structure. The prison yard was an enclosure about one hundred and thirty feet long and, perhaps, sixty or seventy feet wide, surrounded on one side by the brick wall of the prison, about sixteen feet high, bounded on the other three sides by the stockade, whose height equalled that of the brick wall. The surface of the earth within the stockade was almost entirely dry sand; this reflected the heat from the sun like millions of little mirrors, and the high walls about us in a great measure warded off all motion of the outer atmosphere. By the last of August there were more than a thousand prisoners with us, and to cook their food it was necessary to build fires all over the yard, within five or six feet of each other. The heat from these fires, added to the tropical heat of the sun, made the yard a little purgatory,

and added to this was the black, bitter smoke with which they filled the air. October lessened the heat of the sun, but added more fires to the number already too numerous for comfort, and more smoke. On October 19th about four hundred men who had been longest in Cahaba were called out of prison and placed on a boat for Selma, with the assurance by our guards that we were destined for exchange. My company was among those esteemed so fortunate, and while we were drawn up in line before the office of the prison commander, several who had been confined to the hospital outside of the prison joined our ranks, among whom was my friend Gere. Gere had had a slight wound in his foot, which for a long time, while with us in the stockade, refused to heal. For several weeks it was merely a slight wound that gave less of pain than annoyance, but some time in October the discomfort became greater. The unhealed spot increased in size, locomotion became difficult, and manifestations of constitutional disturbance began to appear, and increasing day by day, he sought the privilege of going to the hospital outside, and his request was granted. He had been from us but a few days when unmistakable signs of gangrene showed themselves in the wounded foot, and destroyed much of the skin and subcutaneous tissues before it could be arrested. He was still weak, pale, and feverish when he learned that there was a probability of exchange for those who



had come to Cahaba with him; and soliciting the aid of a companion, he found a pair of old cast-off crutches, and with the aid of these determined to go with us to our lines. Trembling from weakness and excitement, his face thin and pale from protracted suffering and disease, he came slowly toward us, and for a moment, so great a change had taken place in his appearance, I did not recognize him. Giving him what assistance I could, we were soon on the boat, and relating to each other our fortunes since we parted. To the sick man the prospect of returning to his home and friends once more acted like a strong stimulant, and he could not restrain himself from giving expression to his pleasure. By the time we arrived at Selma, however, two or three hours later, he was completely exhausted, and only by the aid of another beside myself could he make any progress. Finding that locomotion, even with these aids, would soon be impossible, I placed him on my back, his arms around my neck, his legs about my hips, and in this way we travelled the distance from the boat to the cars, perhaps three fourths of a mile, and at Demopolis, McDowell's Landing, and Meridian repeated the scene. At each of these places the distance from the cars to the boat, from boat to cars, and from cars to prison, was from an eighth to half a mile, and our novel appearance in travelling the streets seemed one of the attractions that drew a crowd to view our battalion as it passed

along. Our journey commenced at Cahaba early in the day, and we reached Meridian only long after dark. Here we were placed in the same pen we had occupied in July, but the comparatively large number compelled to occupy the small stockade made our surroundings no better than at Cahaba. In moving bodies of Union prisoners from one place of confinement to another in the Confederacy, it seemed a universal rule to assure them that they were on their way to be exchanged. This statement was made to us even in going from Meridian to Selma in the July previous. Then the statement was made that we would soon be sent to City Point, and there turned over to our authorities. When we were called out of Castle Morgan we were informed that we would be sent to Vicksburg, and knowing there was no large prison in Mississippi, a major portion of our number fully believed the assertions thus made to them. Just before leaving Cahaba I conversed with another friend in the hospital, who, having lost his good right arm recently, was too weak to go with us. He told me we were not to be exchanged. He had formed his belief from overhearing the conversation of two Confederate officers. The information robbed me of the pleasant dream indulged in by my comrades, but, as a compensation, my disappointment a few days later was less than many others. No allusion to any continuation of our homeward journey was made the following

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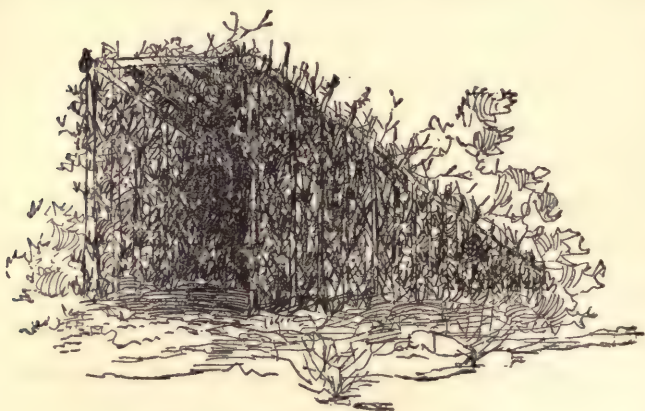
morning, and as soon as the usual ration of meal was issued to us, all took up the usual dull round of captive occupations. As before, one of the buildings was reserved for the exclusive use of Confederate conscripts, deserters, etc., and not more than fifteen or twenty could be comfortably housed in the other building. All the remainder of our four hundred was obliged to sleep out doors on the ground. Here we had one advantage, however, over Cahaba. The prison commander allowed us to have an axe to cut our wood with, and if we could get anything to make a cover for ourselves, we were permitted to make houses. As commissary of the company, I went outside of the stockade every other day to obtain our rations of meal and bacon. When out on these occasions I always looked about for something that I could take back with me to assist in making a house. Often it was impossible to get more than a single shingle or piece of board, perhaps a foot square, and at no time do I remember finding a piece of board more than three feet long and five or six inches wide. Once, in a hog-pen beside the commissary house, I espied a small tin baking pan, six inches wide and eight inches long, having sides an inch high ; it was covered with the filth of the pen, dented, twisted, and jambed, but it was the most valuable find that ever fell to my lot during my captivity, and I was regarded much as are men in Colorado who have discovered a valuable

mine. It was a veritable "bonanza." To us now, surrounded by all the comforts of life, how small a thing it seems to record the finding of a little piece of board six inches by eighteen, or a little tin pan trampled all out of shape by swine; but to us at that time these things were the maximum of possible boons. By much importuning was our mess permitted to go twice, with a guard, to the forest, a few rods away, and fetch an armful of boughs to spread upon the ground. The favor was, even then, only granted by representing that Gere was very ill, and his fever much increased by lying upon the cold, wet, bare earth. When it rained, as it often did at that season, we used to sit on the ground, "hunched up," and many a night did the majority sleep sitting on the bare ground, their knees drawn up to the chest, the head resting over the knees, or with legs crossed, Turkish fashion, an elbow upon the leg, and the hand supporting the head. If the nights were dry, two or three would sleep side by side, "spoon fashion." After two or three weeks of patient gathering of shingles, bits of wood, and boards, we had collected enough to make a house for our mess of four. It was made by driving into the ground, five feet apart, two crooked limbs, the crotches being three feet from the ground. A stick was laid from one limb to the other, and from this cross-piece sticks and boards extended, slanting to the ground four feet dis-



tant. On this framework, earth, chips, sods, etc., were piled.

If the sticks were strong enough, a sufficient quantity of earth was laid to shed the rain; but if observation taught us the sticks would not bear so great a weight, we compromised, taking less earth and more,



OUR "DORMITORY" AT MERIDIAN.

rainfall. The sides were closed as thoroughly as we could do it with our means; then our shelter was finished. When extended at full length, with our heads "under the eaves," we were covered to our hips, the legs and feet exposed to the weather. If the limbs were drawn up a rain without wind would only fall upon the legs from the knees to the feet. Those who were sick or could not get outside of the stockade did not fare so well.

Some kind-hearted philanthropist will wonder why

we did not construct such houses for all the sick and complaining. Now, the fact was, it was an herculean task to build even so rude a structure as I have described. Only six or eight were built at all, and every man seemed to be about as badly off physically as he could be, and there was something called a hospital in another stockade, to which the worst cases were supposed to go.

As a compensation for sickness most men were granted by—shall I say a kind Providence?—dulled sensibilities. Men who had suffered long with diarrhoea, dysentery, dyspepsia, scurvy, ague, and the remainder of that heart-sickening catalogue of diseases, passed gradually from cramps, pain, fever, thirst, headache, backache, and groans to whining, dulness, stupor, and at length to kind death, that terminates all of these.

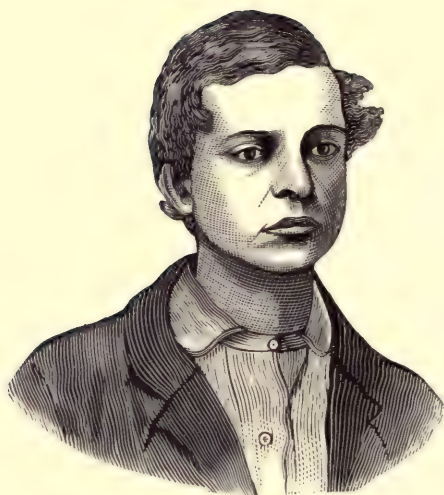
As an example, I recall a tall young boy, a member of the One Hundred and Fourteenth Illinois Infantry. When I first noticed him, he had just begun to have diarrhoea and dysentery. The miserable, polluted surface water, the coarse meal, poorly cooked, the exposure to the cold rains, had produced their legitimate results, and he was going often to the “sink.” A few days later his journeys were fully as frequent, but his steps were slower, his face was more hollow, his eyes more dull. He growled at first, then complained in a hollow voice; the lines of pain and long-suffering deep-

ened upon his face; his steps grew slower, weaker, sometimes staggering; he neglected to fasten his clothing; fæces ran from the bowels as he slowly dragged himself to the "sink." A day later he sat all day resting his chest upon his knees, his head falling forward. The next day he lay upon his side on the ground; some one gave him all he had—some boughs of pine—for a bed. He was too weak to go to the "sink" now. The drawn, haggard, suffering face showed less of the agony he manifested a few days before, and more of weakness, dulness. The eyes grew more sunken, the discharges from the bowels were only a little bloody mucus. He could answer questions if one asked him anything; he asked occasionally for a sup of water, never for food. He was getting more and stupefied. During the day we placed over him whatever we could to render him as comfortable as possible. I went to him in the night—he was only a few feet away from us—and found him dead.

A cold rain started in before morning, and at daylight some one pulled off his ragged garments to cover his own shivering limbs. A detail of our men bore him out of the gate and left him where he was enduring less of suffering than those of his comrades he had left in the stockade.







G. J. TRENAMAN.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

ORDWAY'S ATTEMPT AT ESCAPE AND HIS PUNISHMENT—ESCAPE OF CONN, BUFFINGTON, AND THEIR COMRADES—TRENAMAN'S NARRATIVE.

**B**ELONGING to our mess was a tall, awkward boy named Ordway, who, though possessed of far more native shrewdness than a casual observer would suppose, was "queer," and at times was almost simple in his manner.

Obtaining possession of a common table knife, he by some means converted the back of it into a crude saw, and with this attempted to saw through two of the timbers forming a part of the stockade. At that time a line had been marked a few feet from the stockade over which no captive was permitted to pass; so that all work must be done when it was so dark that a human form close to the stockade would not be observed by the sentries. Night after night he cautiously and slowly performed his dangerous work. To make an opening sufficiently large to admit the passage of his body it was necessary to saw both timbers through near the ground, and again at a point

two or three feet higher. The two lower cuts had been finished and the upper ones begun when Ordway persuaded Trenaman, a gun-boat boy, to assist in the undertaking. Trenaman crossed the dead line and began work, but the probability of detection, and the certainty of death or of being maimed if discovered, soon caused him to retreat; and he would not hazard his life again in the dangerous scheme. Ordway, however, continued the work, and had nearly succeeded, when one day the marks of the saw were observed by some Confederate outside, and its origin traced to Ordway. The provost marshal, Fitzpatrick, afterward claimed to Trenaman to have known of the work from the first, and asserted that on the night when Trenaman had assisted Ordway he was himself standing outside with a pistol, ready to shoot the first person who might attempt to pass through. The assertion of Fitzpatrick was probably untrue.

As soon as the discovery of the work and its author had been made, Fitzpatrick had the sawn timbers brought inside the prison, and compelled Ordway to saw both into pieces just the length of his knife-blade, and split them into "kindlings" not larger than its handle, and decreed that all of the labor must be performed with the crude knife-saw, and no portion of the wood thus prepared could be used for fuel by any one of the prisoners. Poor Ordway, how many weary hours he passed over those timbers! No idling

was permitted, but day after day rolled by ere his monotonous task was finished, and then the carefully guarded pile was sent to the office of the marshal for his private use, and Ordway breathed easier when a week passed by and no supplement was added to the sentence he had already served. He fully expected when his task was done that he would be tied up by his thumbs or "bucked and gagged" a portion of every day for a week.

A few nights after the scheme of Ordway (commonly known as "Kansas," on account of his being a member of the Seventh Kansas Cavalry) had been discovered and its originator punished, another little band of five determined to risk their lives in attempting to escape, by going over instead of through the stockade. These five were "Andy" Conn, whom we have mentioned before as the "sheriff" of Castle Morgan; George Trenaman, who had assisted Ordway in the attempt to saw through the stockade; Hamilton J. Buffington, of the Forty-seventh Illinois; Tubbs, a native Mississippian, who had belonged to the Confederate Sixth Mississippi in the early part of the war, from which he had deserted; and a fifth person named Green.

About the top of the stockade, as was the case with all completed stockades, was a guard walk, wide enough for a sentry to pace back and forth while on duty. Each piece of walk around the four sides of the



prison was provided with a sentry-box, placed near the centre of the walk, in which the sentinel could stand during stormy weather. The five comrades had determined to attempt their escape during the first stormy night, and this time seemed their opportunity, as it was very dark and raining hard, and all the little fires on that side of the prison had been extinguished by the fast-falling drops.

Noting that the guards about the top of the stockade were carefully housed from the storm in their sentry-boxes, Conn crossed into the corner of the prison pen, while Buffington, crossing the dead line, mounted quietly upon his shoulders and drew himself to the top of the stockade, where, standing upon the guard walk, he silently drew up one after another of his companions, and assisted them to drop into the mud beneath them. Several other prisoners happened to be near that part of the prison at the time, but the deeds of the fleeing men were so quickly performed that ere they had comprehended their import and recovered from their astonishment all had passed over the stockade and were noiselessly departing from it. In after years an account of their undertakings and suffering was written by one of their number, from which I have gleaned an outline of their experiences at that time. As soon as all were outside they passed quietly between the tents of the sleeping guard, temporarily off duty. But a few rods away was the

thick timber, and to this they directed their course, trusting to the fast-falling rain to so wash away all scent of their tracks as to render it impossible for the hounds to follow them. Entering the timber, and travelling a mile or two, they stopped and huddled about a large tree, waiting for daylight to appear. Knowing how easy it is for persons to become lost or to travel in a circle when in darkness, they believed it safest to remain where they were until by the aid of daylight they could pursue the course they had decided upon. The nearest point where Union troops were stationed, except Mobile, was Vicksburg, one hundred and fifty miles away. As several of the party were acquainted with the country between that city and Jackson, and as the route to Vicksburg was through a country more easily travelled than the one toward Mobile, all decided to make Vicksburg their objective point; but it was easier to decide where they would go than to be certain of the direction to it with no compass. With the sun hidden by day and the sky overcast by night, where was east and where west were mere matters of conjecture. One or two tried to recall their knowledge of wood-craft, and decide the points of the compass by noting the growth of the moss upon the trees. Depending at last upon the guesses of the majority, but with no certain data, they began their tramp through the pathless forest. Cheered with the prospects of again being free, they

marched steadily the greater part of three days and nights, giving only a few hours of each twenty-four to needed rest. During all this time they were unable to see the sun or a single guiding star, and saw no human being to whom they dared speak and obtain information as to the points of the compass.

On the third night out, after fording a stream with the chilling water shoulder deep, about eight o'clock they encountered a negro, accompanied by a large hound, in the road. Trusting in that Providence which inspired the heart of the slave with freedom's hope and made him faithful in the hour of need, without fear they told him who they were and where they came from, whereupon he exclaimed, "My God, massa ge'men, you is only three miles from Meridian." This was disheartening. They had doubtless travelled enough to have covered a third of their journey, and were still hardly more than an hour's walk from the pen they had left three days before. Conversing further with the negro, he told them his cabin was but a short distance away, and, in answer to their inquiry for food, he volunteered to bring them something if they would remain where they were while he went to his cabin and prepared it.

Hardly had he departed when a suspicion arose that he might not return alone—that he might inform their enemies and take them back to Meridian. To guard against this they left the place where he had promised

to meet them, selecting a point from which they could steal away should they discover that he intended to be false to them. In due time, however, he returned alone, and guiding them to the shelter of an unused blacksmith shop, he placed before them a bountiful amount of corn-dodgers and bacon, the first food they had tasted since their escape. Said one of the number to me afterward, "I have since eaten at some of the best tables in America, but at no place did I ever have such a feast." The *chef* at Delmonico's never placed before his guests viands so delicious as the dodgers and bacon of that black negro. Nor did the good offices of their new-found friend cease at simply feeding them. At the suggestion of one of the refugees, he volunteered to return to them by five A.M. on the following day and guide them as far as he could, with safety to himself, on their journey westward. The boys slept well on that dry ground floor. Long before daylight the negro came and presented them with more dodgers and bacon, and also a bottle of Louisiana rum. To Trenaman the negro gave a pair of cotton pants and a shirt in exchange for a pair of cavalry pants of which he had come in possession at Cahaba. After this deal all were dressed in butternut clothing, but not one had a hat.

Falling under the guidance of their dusky friend, they were piloted through the woods about five miles, and then given instructions to follow a certain



trail for about ten miles, which would bring them to the cabin of a friendly negro, who would pilot them farther on. They bade him a hearty good-by, for he proved a Moses to them. Trenaman, who was familiarly called by his companions "Jett," an abbreviation of his middle name, had no shoes, and by this time was limping painfully on bruised and bleeding feet. To protect them, he tore from his shirt all that he could spare, and with the pieces bound them up, affording, however, but little protection.

They had not gone far when a dispute arose as to the right road, for it was now daylight, and caution said, "Keep in the timber." Buffington aspired to the leadership of the party, but it was finally decided that Buffington and Green were to go the way they thought best, while Conn, Tubbs, and Jett were to take their choice of routes; and thus they separated.

Tramping all that day, on the approach of darkness they built a fire of chestnut rails, retired to their muddy beds, and it was not many seconds before they were dreaming of home and something to satisfy hunger. Jett had not been long asleep when he felt two or three thumps, and jumping to his feet, he heard Conn exclaim, "Jett, you are all afire!" Jett had his back to the fire while asleep, and Conn, awaking, found the chestnut rails had thrown sparks on Jett's shirt and set it on fire. By it he lost about eighteen inches in circumference of pants and shirt—in fact, be-

tween the amounts taken to cover his feet and that consumed by the fire, he had but little shirt left.

Progress was made at times by daylight through the timber and swamps, and at other times by night on the highway, the men avoiding all human beings, both white and black, and subsisting on yams dug from the fields. On the sixth or seventh day of their escape, about sundown, they came to a small clearing in the centre of which was an old weather-beaten frame house, resting on underpinnings about a foot and a half from the ground, and minus doors and windows. The only living things about the premises were an old sow and her litter of pigs, of the lean and hungry kind. The board floor was loose. The refugees had tramped almost continuously since the night of the fire.

At no time were they so tired, hungry, and sore during their strike for liberty. Conn fell asleep at once; Tubbs and Jett tore off some clapboards, and with Conn's flint, bowie knife, and a little cotton made a fire and were soon asleep. They had not been asleep long when suddenly Tubbs rolled over on to Jett. Both jumped to their feet, and stood peering at one another for some time. Here was a mystery. Lying down they again slept, but soon Jett rolled against Tubbs. Again both quickly roused up, and Tubbs angrily exclaimed to Trenaman that he would endure no more of his nonsense, and threatened chastisement if the occurrence was repeated.

Just then from under the floor came swinish grunts and squeals that suggested to the weary and irritated refugees a cause of their previous disturbances. The old sow and her progeny had established a "squatters'" home there, and every movement of her body lifted the floor above her. The discovery restored both men to good-humor, and once more they laid down together only to be disturbed again as before.

Tubbs jumped to his feet with an exclamation of wrath, vowing vengeance on his tormentors. "Jett," said he, "hold up one of those boards, and I'll see if we can't have sweet vengeance on that old brute."

Trenaman did as requested, and his companion seized a pig. It gave a horrible squeal, and before the captors could pull it through the floor the mother thrust her jaws through the opening, and to save himself from injury Tubbs dropped his prize. Both boys jumped on the board and kept the enraged brute from coming through. They waited till all was quiet and tried it again, this time with success. With Conn's bowie they cut its throat, skinned it, carved out the hams, and threw the remainder away. They placed the hams on a stick, broiled them, and then gnawed. There was hardly an ounce of meat on both shanks. They woke Conn and offered some to him, but he, after a casual examination, with a look of disappointment and disgust, fell back asleep. He was too weary even to eat. Morning came, and they

pushed on, keeping by day in the timber near the highway, and travelling on the latter by night, keeping a sharp lookout for the Confederate patrol. Whenever the latter were discovered the boys would dodge into the timber until they had passed out of sight.

The thought of being recaptured was ever uppermost in their minds. Several times they heard hounds upon their tracks, and as water was their only means of safety, they fled to the nearest streams and swamps, fortunately always near at hand. Here they would wade for hours, until assured that the danger from further pursuit was passed. Several days after the confiscation of the pig they ventured into the cabin of some negroes belonging on the plantation of Zack Williams, making known their true character; and it may be remarked in passing that their confidence was never betrayed by any of the field slaves. The negroes gave the boys a good meal, and directed them to an old Unionist named Dickenson. After an all-night tramp they reached the cabin of the Unionist, and informing him who they were, made known their wants. He accepted their statements without hesitation, although he, as well as others, had paid dearly for placing confidence in similar statements made by Confederate soldiers for the purpose of testing their loyalty to the Southern cause. Dickenson, who was a typical "poor white," as soon as he had heard their statement, cried out to his wife, "Here,



Catherine, now then yer can see sum generwine Yankees." The old woman, to whom evidently such a vision was one of the remarkable things of her life, held up both hands and exclaimed in astonishment, "Well, well, the' look jes' like other folks."

The family, which was very poor and as ignorant as they were destitute, consisted of the old folks and two grown sons, who, to save themselves from conscription, remained hidden in the timber most of the time. Once Confederate soldiers went to the house to conscript the sons, and being disappointed in their expectations, pulled the old couple from their bed, tied their hands behind them, and then proceeded to demolish everything in the house. In some manner the old couple signalled to the sons that the "Yankees" were at the house, and the young men came home. A meal of squash alone was soon prepared and heartily eaten. During the day, to the surprise of all, Green came along. He claimed to have disagreed with Bufington, and that the two had voluntarily parted company. By some friendly negroes Green also had been directed to "Massa Dickenson's." That night the boys started, under the guidance of the Dickenson boys, for Pearl River, distant twenty miles, and within fifty miles of Vicksburg. About midnight the guides pointed out the residence of a miserly old fellow who was a rampant friend of the Confederacy, and suggested that he be called up and compelled to con-

tribute something to their comfort. The proposition was accepted, and while the Dickensons were hidden close by, Tubbs knocked at the door. In response the old miser came out and asked what was wanted. Tubbs informed him that they wanted something to eat, and was told there was nothing in the house for them. "Now see here, old fellow, we've been in the ditches of Atlanta for the last six months. Hood's licked, and we's goin' home on furlough, and we uns is hungry, and if you don't open that ere door and give us somethin' ter eat, we'll kill every doggoned critter on the place." This plain proposition was understood by the old miser, and the door was thrown open at once. The boys were supplied with corn-bread and bacon quite bountifully, and soon bidding the old fellow good-night, they resumed their journey. About daybreak they arrived on the bank of Pearl River, where their guides left them.

Taking possession of a ferry-boat, they crossed at once to the west bank, and went to Dogwood Ferry, where they were informed they would find friends by the name of Harkens. On arriving at the Harkens's house they found three young women from twenty-five to thirty years of age, who looked on them with a good deal of suspicion when the boys informed them that they were escaped Yankee prisoners. However, they welcomed the boys in, and in the course of half an hour, after a careful cross-questioning, three strap-

ping fellows made their appearance, and in a very few minutes all were on friendly terms. The Harkens family were poor, having no slaves ; but, unlike the Dickensons, were men of some education and well informed.

Our boys passed the day there, with one or other of the women always on the lookout. The rebellion was discussed in a general way, and the *New York Tribune* was quoted by the Harkens boys as though they received and read it daily. They spent their time in the timber, their food being brought to them by their wives. As darkness came on the boys prepared for another weary tramp. Jett, being the only barefooted one in the party, one of the women presented him with a pair of white stockings and a pair of gaiters. The boys never forgot the kindness of the Dickenson and Harkens families.

Travelling mostly by night, sometimes when it was so dark they clasped hands for fear of losing each other, and often hearing the hounds which they feared were on their track, they finally reached the Yazoo River. Here they found a ferry-boat, and were proceeding to cross when a man came out of his house and hallooed. Getting no response, he fired a shot in the darkness toward them ; but as he did not approach them, they retained possession of the boat, and were soon across the river.

The next day they met a middle-aged negro, and

telling him who they were, requested some food. It was hard to convince the man that they were "Yankees." The fellow, full of sympathy, burst out crying, and said :

"Gemmen, you isn't fooling me, is you?" They assured him that they were not, and asked him for an explanation of his strange conduct. He said : "I been dun fooled befo' by Confederate sojers. Dey whipped me hard, an' hanged two of Massa Simpson's boys on yon'er plantation." When the old man was fully convinced he took them to his cabin and furnished them with bread and bacon.

A mile or two farther on, while walking in the highway, they came to a bend in the road, and there came in plain sight of a patrol. They were too near to escape by running, so they decided to walk directly toward them and depend upon some story of Tubbs's to extricate them from their undesirable position.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

### TRENAMAN'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

AS a native Mississippian, Tubbs spoke the dialect of the Southern people, and at all times, as much as possible, he carried on conversation with doubtful strangers. Directly on their escape it had been agreed that if they should get into close quarters Tubbs was to act as spokesman, the others to keep silent till called upon to speak. So to the questions, "Who are you all? where you all from? and where ye goen?" Tubbs answered:

"We're from Atlanta, and goin' hum on furlough."

"What regiment do you all b'long to?"

"Sixth Mississippi."

"Who is yer kernel? what company ye b'long to, and who is yer capten?"

"Kernel Jones; Company B; Capt'n Gault."

"So the Yanks cleaned Hood out, did they?"

"Yas."

"Well, good-day; wish the doggoned war was over."

When safely past the patrol, the boys blessed Tubbs

and his Southern dialect again and again. After days of travel, sleeping occasionally in cotton-gins, but oftener in the woods, and at such times suffering indescribable agonies, caused by the cold; living on persimmons, and occasionally catching an opossum and trading for corn pones with the negroes, they came to a plantation belonging to a Mr. Donaldson, a few miles in the rear of Yazoo City. They found, after close inspection, the only persons in charge were a negro man and child. With this friendly negro the boys tarried three days. The child, a bright little fellow about seven years of age, was always on picket during the daytime. Here they slept in the owner's bed, ate of his pork and potatoes, and when ready to depart, having had a good rest and gained much in strength, their benefactor supplied them with rations the like of which they had not seen since their unwilling departure from "God's country."

A few days after this, and on the evening of December 6th—a bitter cold night, the ground frozen hard—they came to a large white house, in the rear of which was a negro cabin. It was suggested that Green enter the cabin and inquire if that road led to Vicksburg. Green went in while the rest of the party stayed outside, shivering in the cold. After what seemed ages to them Jett exclaimed: "Andy, for God's sake, let's go in and get Green. He is warming himself, while we are freezing."

They went in, and there was Green standing complacently with his back to the fire. With him was a saucy old wench and a well-dressed octoroon. They would give the boys no information, and were loath to give them anything to eat. In the mean time, the octoroon had slipped out unnoticed, and upon her absence being discovered, Conn grew suspicious and urged an immediate departure; but Jett begged to be allowed to warm himself a few minutes longer.

As they were about to depart the wide cabin door was suddenly thrown open and six or eight shining gun-barrels appeared, pointing toward them. Immediately a voice cried out: "Surrender, men; you are our prisoners." Conn replied, "We surrender."

The sergeant who had charge of the rebel squad said: "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

Conn answered: "We are Yankee prisoners, and having made our escape, are trying to reach our lines."

"That's all right; fall in," was the command, and with a rebel on each side of a Yank, they were marched to the scout's headquarters, about half a mile back in the timber. They proved to be a detachment of Captain Jones's scouts or so-called guerillas. The octoroon had informed her master, a Dr. Watts, and he in turn informed the scouts of the presence of the Yankee prisoners. At the time of their recapture they were within thirty miles of Vicksburg, the guiding star of their hopes. Next morning under a strong

guard they set out for Jackson, Miss., by way of Canton. Reaching Canton on the second night, they were lodged in the Canton jail, and here were joined by Buffington, who was recaptured that day. Again they were altogether. Four weeks had elapsed since their escape. At Canton jail was incarcerated a man named Meredith, who had been a purchasing agent for the Confederate government, and who, it was reported, had placed three hundred head of hogs belonging to the Confederate government on his own plantation, and reported them captured by the Federals. A Confederate agent discovered the fraud, and he, learning of it, made good his escape to the Federal lines, from which time he made Cincinnati his temporary home, occasionally going to Vicksburg, then ascending the Yazoo River in a dugout to Yazoo City, and thence overland to his family, who resided on his plantation in the rear of the city. The scouts learned of these occasional trips, and at last captured him and brought him to Canton, where he was confined with the Yankee prisoners.

On the fourth day all reached Jackson, where they found the inhabitants fleeing from the town, fearing a raid by Colonel Osburn. The last train having left for Meridian before their arrival, they were placed in a box car with a lot of negroes and carried to Granada, Miss., where were a number of Wisconsin three-months men captured by Forrest in his raid into



Memphis. Many of them had their legs badly lacerated by dogs in their futile efforts to escape. At the station south of Granada, Buffington, Conn, and Meredith made a desperate jump for liberty from the car. The guards fired at them, but all made their escape unharmed.

At Granada, Tubbs, Green, and Jett were placed in a tobacco warehouse. No fires were allowed them, and their food consisted only of corn in the ear. In a few days they were removed to Meridian, but found the survivors of the four hundred whom they had left in the stockade had been sent back to Cahaba, to which place in a few days they followed them.

A few years ago, at the request of an editorial friend, Buffington published in a Western journal a reminiscence of his experience from the time of separating from his comrades. The cause of separation was a disagreement as to which of the roads was the better to travel. From his articles I shall give a condensed account of his experience, as in no other way can the full meaning of the phrase "an escaped prisoner" be so vividly conveyed to the reader. Buffington is still living (1888), a resident of Kansas; but the enormous tax upon his physical and mental powers endured in the weeks of his desperate struggle for freedom have left a sad impress upon the once iron frame and unbending will. Mentioning the cause of separation, he continues:

“After we agreed to disagree and separate, Green and I struck out for ourselves, and soon reached an old log-house about half full of cotton. We were tired and foot-sore, and the cotton looked so inviting we could not resist the temptation, so we crawled in, laid down, and slept until the sun was about an hour high. We awoke much refreshed, and started out. We went down the bottom about a mile, and came to a good road running east and west. The sun came out bright, clear, and warm, infusing new life into our chilled bodies, and adding a glow of brightness to the cheerless landscape. It was a pleasant, grateful sight for us to behold the warm, bright face of the sun once more, as it was our first glimpse of the ‘god of day’ since three days before leaving the prison. We travelled west for a few miles until we came to a large stream, which we crossed on a big bridge, and then discovered a number of houses on one side, which we took to be negro cabins. As we were almost famished with hunger, we directed our steps toward the cabins, in the hope of securing a meal. Our supposition as to the occupants of the cabins was a great mistake, but, as it turned out, proved a fortunate one for us. We were about as hard-looking specimens of humanity as could be found anywhere within the limits of civilization, and it required considerable pluck to approach any well-regulated household, even though hunger was gnawing our very vitals. We

were both bareheaded and barefooted, and our clothing consisted of an assortment of rags which only by courtesy could be called pants and shirt. We marched boldly up to the door of one of the cabins and knocked. The door was soon opened, and we thought our game was up, for there stood an old man facing us, his eyes wide open in astonishment, and a perplexed look on his brow. He talked for a minute, then asked us to come in. He asked us who we were, where we came from, and what we wanted. It occurred to us that the old gentleman had a tender heart, and was, perhaps, a rebel only from force of circumstances, so we determined to tell him the truth. We told him we were Yankee prisoners, had escaped, and were endeavoring to reach the Union lines. After conversing for a short time, the old man ordered supper for us. The meal was soon prepared. It was an excellent one, and we did it full justice. Shortly after supper the old man showed us to our bed, and left us alone.

"Green and I lay awake for a long time discussing our situation, and fully made up our minds that we would awake to find ourselves captured, and would soon be taken back to that horrible den we had suffered so much in endeavoring to escape from. But there was nothing to be done. If the old man intended to betray us we were already under guard, and if he did not all would possibly be well in the morning. So, resigning ourselves to our fate, whatever it

might be, we soon were fast asleep and dreaming of our own firesides and loved ones in far-distant States.

“Our host awakened us in the morning, and after we had made our toilet, set an excellent breakfast before us, which, to our eyes, seemed a feast fit for the gods. After breakfast the old gentleman invited us to seats before the old-fashioned fireplace, and then told us that two of his sons were among the guards at the Meridian prison from which we had escaped. One of them had been home on a visit a few days before our escape, and had told him all about the horrible condition and cruel treatment of the prisoners, and therefore he could not find it in his heart to report us and have us sent back to such a place. While, perhaps, his duty to the Confederacy would require him to deliver us up, he believed it would be an inhuman and unchristian act, and he would not do it. Instead, this kind-hearted old Southerner resolved to do what little he could to make us comfortable and help us along on our journey to liberty. He told us to go upstairs and keep hid that day, and he would try to make us each a pair of shoes before night. By nine o'clock that evening he had our shoes ready. They were rather light and thin, but beat going barefooted all to pieces. He then gave each of us an old coat, and gave me a hat and Green a cap. He also supplied us liberally with provisions from his scanty store, and gave us all the information he could about the route to our



destination. With tears in our eyes and words of gratitude on our lips we bade the old man a hearty good-by, and started on our dark and lonely road to the Mississippi.

“Right at this point in our journey my mind is a total blank. There are eight or nine days that I absolutely cannot account for. I do not know whether I was sick or well, where we went, or what happened to us. The record of those days is absolutely lost so far as I am concerned. The next thing I remember is that as we were travelling along the road we learned from a darkey that the other boys were about two miles ahead of us, at the home of a man named Dickenson. I had been feeling very weak and sick, and soon I had to give up entirely, as I was prostrated by a severe attack of chills and fever. I was terribly ill; if my life depended on going a mile farther, I would have surely lost it. My head seemed on fire and ready to split open with the terrible pain. At one moment I was burning up, and the next as cold as death. So I laid down in a fence corner and told Green to go on and find the other boys and tell them that I was down sick, and then come back to me. I knew the boys would return instantly as soon as they knew of my helpless condition, and help me to a place of refuge until I should be able to continue the journey.

“Green accordingly started, and I laid down on the cold, damp ground to await his return. Every min-

ute seemed an hour, and the time seemed an age. I waited patiently, however, until a much greater length of time had elapsed than was necessary to go to Dickenson's and come back. Then I began to be alarmed, and all sorts of wild fancies filled my fevered brain. I was sure I had been deserted by Green, and left to perish miserably alone thousands of miles away from home, without a kind word from any one or a tender hand to give me the least comfort or assistance in my awful agony. The night was passed in terrible dreams and short waking spells, when the awful loneliness of my position would force itself upon me despite my great sufferings. My mouth was parched and my head on fire. It seemed if I did not get a drink of water I would surely perish. Toward morning nature came to my relief, and I fell into a sound and dreamless slumber.

"The sun was up when I awoke, and although feeling very sick and exhausted, I determined to reach Dickenson's, which I knew was only about two miles away. So, mustering all my strength, and concentrating my will to force my shaky limbs to do their duty, I started out, and finally reached the home of Mr. Dickenson in a very weak and exhausted condition. I found them to be very kind and friendly Union people. They took me in, put me to bed, and took such good care of me that in two or three days I was myself again, and ready to resume my journey. Here I

learned that Green had cruelly deserted me, and had given to the other boys, as a reason for being alone, that he and myself had had a disagreement. In the course of a day or two, owing to the good nursing and care I received from the Dickensons, I was able to resume my journey.

“Bidding the old folks a hearty good-by, I started again toward the Mississippi, and arrived at Pearl River in the night, about twenty hours after leaving the home of the Dickensons. The only means of crossing the river was by a ferry, and as the ferryman—an Irishman, whom I afterward found had but little interest in the Confederacy—lived on the other side of the river, I secreted myself until some time in the forenoon, when I returned to the ferry and started across. As we approached the shore I noticed there was a long, deep cut under the west bank, and it was well for me that it was there; for just as the boat touched the shore, four Rebel scouts came toward the ferry. My heart ‘came up in my mouth,’ and I was almost paralyzed for an instant. But, recovering myself, I made an excuse to step aside a moment. I went into the cut, walked a few steps, until I was out of sight, then ‘took to my heels’ and ran for dear life for half a mile, when I found refuge in a canebrake without being discovered. Emerging from the canebrake in a short time, I travelled the remainder of the day through the woods and away from all roads until

late in the evening, when I secreted myself in a deep hollow and slept a portion of the night; and finding the weather too cold to sleep comfortably, I continued my journey until the following forenoon, when I came to a log-cabin where some poor white women lived. I told them I was going home to Arkansas on a furlough, and was desperately hungry. They gave me something to eat, and told me to keep a sharp lookout for the hounds, for some Yankees had recently escaped from the prison at Meridian, and the officers were hunting them with the blood-hounds. They told me some blood-curdling stories about these ferocious hounds, little dreaming that I was one of the 'Yanks' they were pursuing. The men had put the dogs on a white woman's trail only a few days before, thinking it was one of the escaped prisoners, and the dogs had caught her and torn her all to pieces before the Rebels could get there to prevent it. This information brightened up my ideas considerably, and I resolved to be very cautious in the future, as I had no desire to furnish meat for those terrible devils. Leaving the cabin, I continued westward until I was out of their sight, when I went into the woods and hid until night, when I started out again, and soon reached a large plantation. Here I went to the negroes to get something to eat, but they told me the overseer was a negro, but also a red-hot Rebel, and he would surely betray me if he discovered me. You may be sure I



shook the dust of that inhospitable place off my feet in very short order. I soon discovered some more negro cabins, and had better success this time in getting food to appease my hunger. I travelled all that night until the roosters commenced crowing for day, and was very tired and completely chilled through. Discovering an old cabin on one side, a little way off the road, I went in, and found it partly filled with corn-husks. Making as comfortable a nest as possible, I crawled in and went to sleep.

“Some time in the morning I was awakened, and found a middle-aged white woman standing over me, wringing her hands, half laughing and half crying, and before I could get my wits together she exclaimed, ‘My Lord, William, what are you doing here? What made you act so? Why didn’t you come into the house?’”

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE STORY OF BUFFINGTON'S ESCAPE.

I GOT up and commenced rubbing my eyes, and all this time she kept asking me questions and telling me how glad she was that I had got back. I was all at sea at first, and could not imagine what she was driving at. Pretty soon, however, it dawned upon my mind that she took me for her husband, who had evidently gone to the army, and I thought I had struck a remarkable piece of good fortune and would be tenderly cared for. But it soon occurred to me that the neighbors would readily discover the imposition, even if the lady herself did not, and my last condition would be worse than the first; so I resolved to abrogate all claims to her affections, and show her that she was mistaken in the man. All this took only a moment to think of, and during that time the poor woman was showering endearing epithets and scoldings alternately on my unprotected head. As soon as I got a chance to put in a word, I told her she was mistaken in the man; but she would not have it that way, and I had to argue with her for some time before I could convince her that I was not her 'dear William.' I had

been talking to her only a few moments before I discovered that she was a strong Unionist, and that caused me to believe her husband was a victim of the Rebel conscription; but I had great difficulty in convincing her. She had not heard from her husband for many months, and this, together with the privations and terrors incident to the time and place, had probably unsettled her reason. Poor woman! her fate was a sad one; but it was only a sample of thousands of others—in fact, of all Union people who were so unfortunate as to be compelled to live in the South during the war.

“There was a school-teacher named Agnes living with this lady. She was young and handsome, but, more than all, she had a warm, tender heart, was devoted to the Union cause, and was very kind to me. I had a long talk with her, and received considerable information concerning the condition of the country and my chances of reaching the Union lines without being recaptured. She gave me something to eat, and then advised me to go back to the corn-crib and keep hid that day, and she would send up the river about five miles for another Union man who was hiding from the conscription, and who would very likely guide me a considerable distance on my journey. Toward evening the man came, and we had a long talk about the prospect of getting through. But he did not approve of the scheme, and was afraid he would

get caught. So he gave me all the information he could, but refused to go with me. I bid the fair Agnes a tender good-by, and promised to write to her if I lived until the war was over. But I am sorry to say I never fulfilled that promise. I forgot her address, and although I often thought of her great kindness to me in my hour of need, I was unable to do even that little afterward to show my appreciation.

"As night came on, I prepared to resume my lonely journey. I was within five miles of Black River, and being comparatively rested, I soon covered that distance, and crossed that river without any adventure worthy of note. After crossing the river I travelled four or five miles west, until I came to a high ridge, on which I saw a few log huts, which I took to be negro cabins ; but I was terribly mistaken. I was very cautious, however, and creeping up as quietly as I could, I knocked at the door of one of the cabins. I heard somebody getting out of bed, and soon the door was opened by a fierce-looking old man. Just then the hounds turned themselves loose and began baying like demons, and the deuce was to pay. I was scared nearly out of my wits, but determined to stand my ground bravely, come what would. The old man asked me who I was, where I was going, and what in h—l I was doing there at that time of the night. I felt that the truth would be best, so I gave it to him. But he wouldn't have it that way. He said he knew



I was a Rebel deserter running away from the army, and cursed me for a cowardly whelp. Then he went and got his gun, and talked about shooting me ; but he must have changed his mind, for he didn't do it. Before I talked with him a great while I became convinced that he had been a slave overseer, or 'nigger-driver,' as they were appropriately called before the war, and he was now out of a job, and that was probably what was the matter with him. I rubbed down his ruffled feathers as well as I could, and he finally took me in and kept me all night. After I had told him my story he became quite clever. He told me his name was Chumley, and soon showed that he was not so much of a brute as he at first appeared to be.

"About nine o'clock next morning some Rebel soldiers came to the cabin and demanded that I should be surrendered to them, but he refused to give me up. He kept me at his house all day, and killed a hog, on which we had quite a feast. Toward evening he took me down to the Rebel commander at that place, and he sent me down to Canton on the railroad. I arrived in Canton about sunset, and found everything in the wildest confusion. People were running about the streets as though they were all crazy, and animals of all kinds were rushing around the streets, each one adding his musical tones to the infernal din ; but above all could be heard the booming of cannon only a few miles away, and then I

knew what was the matter. The terrible voice of the Yankee cannon was scaring the poor inhabitants out of their wits, and they expected the Yanks would be down upon them any minute and devour them, or something worse. The guard hurried me toward the jail, and when I arrived, who should I see coming out of the jail but Conn, Trenaman, Tubbs, and Green, who had been captured some time before. They marched us all down to the cars again, and the officer gave the guards orders to blow the brains out of the first d—d Yankee son of a—that made a misstep. They put us into an old box-car on a train that was loaded down with citizens and plunder. It was a long train, and completely packed with the frightened Cantonians, who were fleeing from the wrath to come. They started the train off some time that night and went up the road about twenty-five miles, and then stopped until morning. In the morning they started up and ran awhile, and then stopped to take a rest.

“There were three or four guards with us in the car, and as soon as Conn and I had a chance to speak to each other we commenced to devise plans of escape. We had very little chance to talk, because the guards were so close to us, but after some time and considerable manœuvring we got the rest of the boys to agree to help us to disarm the guards, but before we had a chance to try it Green backed out,

and as Trenaman's feet were so sore that he couldn't travel anyhow, Conn and I resolved to make our escape if possible, and let the others look out for themselves. There was nothing else to be done under the present circumstances, and it was a desperate undertaking at the best.

"There was a good-sized hole in one side of the old car, caused probably by a collision, and several sacks of corn were piled directly under it. One of the guards stood near this hole, and one at each side of the door. Conn and I made up our minds to escape or die in the attempt, and we decided that hole in the side of the car would be either a gateway to liberty or death. I told Conn to get up on the corn-sacks, and when he got ready to jump to give a shout. In a few minutes he shouted, and out he went. I drew the other guards' attention by telling them to look at those fellows getting out at the door, and then I jumped and landed in a heap in the mud, but quickly entered some timber near the track. It was just about sundown when I escaped, and when I got into the timber I hugged the ground close until dark. But I heard nothing of poor Conn, and never saw him again.

"For two days I travelled without a morsel to eat, arriving at a little river just before morning on the third day. After crossing the river I came to a little negro cabin on the outskirts of a village, where the

wildest confusion seemed to prevail. I asked a darkey what the commotion was down in the town, and he told me that the Yankees were coming, and that the people were driving their cattle, horses, and hogs out into the swamps to save them from the enemy. This was cheering news to me. If I could fall in with our troops at this point, it would save me many days' privation and hardship. I was never backward in revealing myself to a darkey, because nearly all of them were with our cause heart and soul, and ever willing to do what little they could, or dared, to help the Union cause. So I told the negro who I was, and gave him an account of my adventures since my escape, and he at once promised to do what he could for me. He took me to an old log house close by, and told me to lay close and he would keep me posted as to the arrival of our troops and bring me something to eat. The house was about half full of cotton, so I made me a comfortable nest, and remained there till about midnight, when the darkey returned and told me that the Yankees had gone in another direction, and did not come into the town. This was a great disappointment, but I was getting sadly used to such, and it did not long rest on my mind.

"The darkey then guided me down to the river to a place where a canoe was hid in the willows, and told me to take it and row down the river. This looked



like a better and more rapid manner of travelling than that which I had been accustomed to, and I accepted it with pleasure. I got in and pulled down the river, and kept going all night. As soon as daylight appeared over the eastern hills I pulled the canoe up into the willows and laid down. I remained there all day, and as night came again I launched my frail bark once more and started down stream. There was hardly any current, and I soon found that it was a very slow way of travelling. The night was very cold, and my hands were stiff and sore with their unaccustomed work at the oar. About ten o'clock that night I came to an old plantation, and I resolved to abandon the canoe and resume my old way of travelling. I pulled into the shore, and getting out, shoved the little boat out into the stream, and bid it good-by as it glided silently away from me in the darkness. I went up to the houses, and found every one had left the plantation but one old darkey, who was left to look after property. The darkey was very kind to me, and I was in a condition to thoroughly appreciate it. He baked me some corn bread in front of the old-fashioned fireplace, and then milked some of the cows and set a large pitcher of the delicious beverage in front of me. It is hardly possible for people who have eaten three meals a day all their lives to understand what a feast this was to me ;

but some of the 'boys' who have suffered privations similar to mine can understand what a treat this homely meal was to me at that time.

"I found that I was now about thirty miles from the Mississippi River, and after bidding my kind friend good-by I started west again. The country from the plantation to the Mississippi is almost all swampy, and the travelling was very difficult and anything but pleasant. I travelled all that night and part of the next day, then hunted up a dry spot and slept until night, when I again resumed my journey. During the night it clouded up and began to drizzle rain. It got so dark that I could not see anything, and I was up to my knees in mud about half of the time. It was very cold and damp, and about as unpleasant for so forlorn a traveller as I was as it could be. Presently I discovered a light some distance from the road, and started for it. My previous experience in cases of this kind had taught me a lesson, and I resolved to be very cautious and investigate the surroundings thoroughly before making any further calls. I made a careful survey of the premises, then stealthily crawled up to the cabin door and listened. I heard a number of voices within, but for some time was unable to catch the drift of the conversation. After intently listening for several minutes I discovered that the occupants of the room were two young women, some small children, and a Rebel soldier. They were roasting peanuts, and

seemed to be enjoying themselves very much. The presence of the Rebel soldier was a damper on my prospects, but I determined to tell him some kind of a yarn, and take the chances of being detected. I accordingly knocked on the door, and it was opened by one of the women, who invited me in. I went in, and told them that I lived over in Arkansas, and was going home on a furlough. I chatted with them for awhile, and they proved to be the most ignorant people I had ever met, even in the most God-forsaken country districts of the South. They absolutely knew nothing, and their ideas about the war and the Yankees would make a cast-iron image smile. The Rebel soldier was the most intelligent of the trio, and I got as much information from him as I could about the distance to the Mississippi and the probable location of the Union gun-boats. He said that the Rebels generally crossed the river at Greenville on a flat-boat, which they arranged so that they could raise and sink it whenever they wanted to. When they wanted to use it they would raise it, and as soon as they were through with it they sunk it again. He said it was sunk at the time, and they could not raise it because there was a Union gun-boat up the river near Greenville. The news about one of our gun-boats at Greenville was joyous tidings to me, and made me feel good clear down to my feet, but I didn't dare show it. However, I resolved to get to Greenville in

he least possible time. The good news almost made me forget how tired and hungry I was, but the aching void in my stomach soon asserted itself, and I asked the girls for something to eat. But they told me they had not a thing to eat in the house, nor anything to make it with. Their father had gone to mill that day, but was not expected home till the next day. I had some Confederate scrip that I picked up somewhere, and I bought some peanuts of them, on which I made a very light supper, and then went to bed. But I could not sleep. Between the pangs of hunger and the wild fancies of freedom that had taken possession of my brain when I heard about the gun-boats, I was kept wide awake. Sleep was impossible, and after rolling and tumbling around for a couple of hours, I finally got up and struck out for the river, which was now the Mecca of my hope and ambition. I travelled until nearly daylight, and then looked about for some place of concealment. The country all around me was filled with Rebel scouts, and great care and caution was necessary to avoid detection. I left the road and went into the timber, where I soon found a large hollow log, and into this I crawled and remained all day without a morsel to eat or even a drop of water. It was not quite so pleasant as sleeping on a feather bed, but I had got used to such little inconveniences and did not mind it very much. But I dreaded the thought of the journey I would have to



make that night. The country was a vast swamp between me and the next plantation, which was five miles away.

“As soon as it got dark I crawled out of the log and started on my dreary tramp. The night was cold and frosty, and I was soon chilled clear through. More than half the time I was up to my waist in mud and water, and I have often wondered since how I endured the terrible sufferings of that awful night. But the hope of soon reaching the river gave me courage to push on as long as I had a vestige of strength left, and I finally reached the plantation, completely exhausted and almost chilled to death. I dragged myself around to the negro quarters, but found them entirely deserted ; and then my courage entirely forsook me, and for a moment I was ready to lie down and die. In the mean time I had discovered that there was a Rebel battery at the house, which was on its way to the river to shell the Union boats. I went up to the gate in front of the big white house, and leaning on it for support, I debated whether to go in and give myself up to the Rebels, in the hope of getting warm and possibly of getting something to eat, or whether I would endeavor to go on and try to find rest and refreshment elsewhere. I studied about the matter for some time, and finally resolved to go on and reach the river or die in the attempt.

“ Having come to this resolution, I started to put it

into execution, but found that I was so cold and stiff that I could hardly move, and when I took my arms off the gate I had great difficulty to keep from falling to the ground. I kept walking around to prevent myself from freezing, and as soon as I had gotten my limbs loosened up a little I started and ran for some distance, which warmed me up a little, and I began to feel a degree less miserable. Travelling something over a mile, I came to an old negro cabin, and the charitable occupant gave me a kindly welcome to his humble home. He had a big fire in an old-fashioned fireplace, and I soon warmed myself in front of its cheery blaze and dried my miserable old rags. In the mean time the old man gave me some corn pone and fat 'possum, and I made a square meal. I was nearly famished, as I had had scarcely anything to eat for three days but a few green peanuts. Just before day he made me a nest up in the loft of the old cabin, and I crawled in and slept nearly all day, which greatly rested and refreshed me. With the return of strength my courage all came back, and I was now ready to face any danger to reach the goal of my ambition—the Mississippi.

“I hoped to reach the river that night, as it was now only a few miles away, and even thought of the possibility of finding the gun-boats and getting to the end of my terrible march before the dawn of another day. But I was fully aware of the difficulties I might have

to overcome, and knew that the greatest caution was necessary, for the country between me and the river thoroughly swarmed with Rebel scouts. As soon as night 'spread her sable mantle over the earth' I started out and directed my course toward a plantation about a mile away. It soon commenced to rain and got very dark, but I reached the plantation in a short time and went to the negro quarters, but found them entirely deserted. While I was scrambling around the negro huts it suddenly cleared off and the moon came out, making the night dangerously bright for my safety, especially as I saw there was a light in the plantation residence. I approached the house carefully from the rear, with the intention of discovering who the occupants were. I heard enough to assure me that several men were there and that my safety depended on keeping out of sight. The night was now so bright that I did not dare start out again, so I crawled under the house to wait till darkness favored my onward progress.

"As soon as the moon went down I made a break for the river, which was only about four hundred rods away. Here I ran on to some negroes, who were greatly surprised when I told them I had just come from the house on the plantation, as they said there were six Rebel scouts there.

"I asked the darkeys about the Union gun-boat, and learned that it passed up and down occasionally,

and was very likely a few miles down the river at that time. After getting all the information I could from my colored friends, I thanked them and started down the river. I went perhaps a mile, and then crawled into the willows under the bank and remained until daylight.

“With the first gray streak of approaching day in the east, I was up and eagerly scanning the river for the long-looked-for gun-boat; and as soon as it was light enough to distinguish objects at any distance, I was rejoiced to behold the object of my search about two miles away.

“I have read and heard about the emotions of the weary traveller in the desert, scorched with the burning heat of a tropical sun, almost blinded with the terrible glare of the sand, and parched with thirst, when he discovered the green oasis in the distance, where he knows he will find pure, cold water, shelter from the sun, and rest and refreshment, if his strength will only hold out until he can reach that one little heavenly spot in the great wilderness of death. Such were the feelings that now almost overpowered me when I beheld my deliverer close at hand—a Union gun-boat flying the Stars and Stripes, the one grand and beautiful emblem of liberty in the great wilderness of slavery through which I had been wandering for so many long and weary days. There in the distance was



the little oasis I had long looked for, and where I knew I could procure rest and refreshments if I could only reach it. But it was fully two miles away, and it would be madness to attempt to reach it in the broad light of day. I could only practise patience and hope that the boat would not hoist anchor before night. I hardly took my eyes off the vessel all day, and from constant watching I could almost discern the officers on the deck. In the afternoon I could see that the men went ashore, and were drilling on the bank. It seemed to me the day would never pass. I was so anxious for the night to come that every hour seemed a week. But the very sight of the dear old flag and 'boys in blue' so near inspired me with hope and courage, and I found patience to remain in my concealment until evening.

"Late in the evening a steamboat came down the river, and I hailed it. They said it was against their orders to land. I told them to wait and I would swim out to the vessel; but for some reason they declined to do so, and started off without me. As soon as it got dark I commenced working my way down the river toward the gun-boat, but the travelling was so difficult and I was in such a weak and exhausted condition that it was daylight the next morning before I reached the point on the bank opposite where the gun-boat was anchored.

I hailed the officer on deck, and told him to send a boat after me, as I wanted to get on board. The yawl was promptly cleared away, and in a few moments I was on board the vessel, a free man once more, with the Stars and Stripes waving over me—ample assurance of care and protection. My emotions completely overcame me, and it was many moments before I could tell my story to the kind-hearted captain and his sympathizing crew.

“I was in a truly deplorable condition—my face and hands covered with scars and bruises, my clothes only a few dirty, tattered rags, and my hair and whiskers matted and stiff with gray-back nits. The men were all very kind to me, and did everything possible for my comfort. The captain told me to go to the wash-room, throw my old rags in the river and take a good bath, and he would send me some clothes. I followed his directions to the letter, and by liberal and repeated applications of soap and water I soon discovered that I was originally a white man. I thoroughly cleaned out my hair and whiskers, although the effort to get a comb through those matted masses frequently brought tears to my eyes; and when I had completed my toilet and donned the handsome suit of clothes sent me by the captain, I felt once more like a man and a Christian. I went on deck, and was warmly complimented by the officers and men on my improved

appearance. The recital of my adventures since escaping from Meridian were eagerly listened to, and the kind-hearted officers endeavored in every way to make me forget the sufferings I had undergone and enjoy myself while in their company. I had quarters with the officers up in the cabin, and they improvised a bed for me on a table, so that I might sleep with them. Many a pleasant hour I spent in that little cabin, and many a drink of their cordials I took, in company with the officers, to strengthen me, and fit me once more for joining my command.

“ On the gun-boat when I arrived were two Rebel soldiers who had been guarding us all summer at Cahaba. They lived over in Arkansas, and having got permission to go home on a furlough, they deserted, as they said they could not conscientiously longer defend a cause which treated its prisoners of war as we had been treated at Cahaba. I sent them to my father's home in Illinois with a letter of introduction, and they obtained good situations with two of our neighbors. One of them was a married man, and had his wife with him on the gun-boat when I met them. Among the Illinois prisoners at Cahaba was a man named Rea, who was given to making ‘Fourth of July speeches;’ and I learned from these two ex-Rebels that his eloquence had much to do with their conversion.

This interesting and practical result is a compliment to Rea's eloquence, and I record it with much pleasure.

"After remaining in my pleasant quarters on the gun-boat long enough to 'recruit my shattered forces,' I bade my kind friends farewell and went to Memphis, where I reported to the general in command. He granted me a thirty days' furlough, as I was still far from being strong or well. I went home and remained a few days, but the desire to rejoin my comrades was so strong that I could not resist, and in less than two weeks I reported to my regiment at Bowling Green, Ky. We were soon ordered to New Orleans, and from there to Spanish Fort, and took part in one of the last battles of the war.

"And when the last charge had been made, the last position taken, and the air was ringing with the expiring groans of the moribund Confederacy, it was pleasant to think, after all our years of fighting and suffering, that the cause for which we had fought and suffered, and for which thousands had died, had at last triumphed—the Union had been preserved, and the old flag once again floated over a reunited country, from which the dark blot of human slavery had been washed with the blood of unnumbered thousands of heroes."

Having followed these comrades through their wanderings, we return once more to the dreary pen in which we were still confined.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

EVERY-DAY LIFE AT MERIDIAN—"RAIDING" THE CONSCRIPTS—DIGGING A TUNNEL—THIRTY-NINE ESCAPED—ALL RECAPTURED OR KILLED—THE MISFORTUNES OF THE REFUGEES.

CONSCRIPTS and deserters were daily added to the crowd within the stockade, and raids upon such were made when it was known that they were in possession of clothing or blankets that could be captured with the possibility of retaining possession. His hard surroundings made every man an Ishmael. A common method of securing blankets and clothing was to mark those who were well supplied, wait till it was known that they were ordered to the front, and then "appropriate" their property; blankets, shirts, socks—anything was acceptable. The train for the Rebel front left Meridian in the morning before daylight. During the night preceding men rendered desperate by their long sufferings from cold would pass near the conscripts sleeping upon the ground or in their house, snatch from the sleeping forms their covering, or from beneath their heads a bundle containing socks, shirts, or drawers, toss them to a comrade

standing waiting, watching in the darkness, and ere the victim could realize the situation both had disappeared in the shadow. Then, upon the part of the conscript, would be cursing, wrath, and gnashing of teeth ; but his fumings would be useless. To find his blankets during the night would be an impossibility, and before the dawn a guard of Confederates would enter the stockade, call the names of those who were to pass out, the line would be formed, the command "forward " given, the gate would close behind the departing column of Confederates, and men who had not known a night of comfort for weeks would, on the following night, wrap themselves in a luxury they had not known since their captivity, and those who had involuntarily contributed to their comfort might perhaps receive a new supply from the Confederate quartermaster or from friends on their arrival at the front.

But such foragings were not unattended with danger to our marauder. Often the Rebels would keep one of three or four awake, and when a hand would be outstretched to grasp the prey, swiftly would a club wielded by a brawny Rebel arm descend upon the member with severe effect. One night, in the house occupied by the Confederates—fifteen or twenty feet from my sleeping-place—a mess of conscripts were sleeping on the floor in one corner of the room. Word had come into the stockade after roll-call at night that a lot of conscripts would be sent away on

the morning train. I chanced to awake some time past midnight, and saw a little fellow—a member of a loyal Kentucky regiment—walk slowly past the corner occupied by the conscripts. He stopped and thrust his hand into a large crack in the side of the house, intending to seize something belonging to the conscripts, knowing they would be sent away in the morning. But some one was on the alert for any such an occurrence, and in a moment the boy drew out his hand, uttering in the same moment a cry of pain. His arm had been struck with a heavy club, and one of the bones of the forearm was broken.

No one could blame the Confederates for defending their property, and certainly there was plenty to excuse our men for stealing from them, for nearly all had been robbed of all or a part of their personal effects, and our men recalled that even the Good Book mentions that a people were directed to “borrow of their neighbors and repay not.”

When our houses had been built a short time a tunnel was started from one of them situated near the stockade, and pushed as fast as possible. Its completion required nearly three weeks, although it was only about twenty feet long. The reason for such slow work is apparent when it is understood that all dirt had to be placed in a haversack and carried to the sink; that only two or three had haversacks; that all work must be done in the night; that a guard was stationed near

the "sink," who would detect any such business if transacted upon any wholesale basis; that our own men must be watched as carefully as were the Rebels (for though there might be but one in all our number who would prove a traitor, that one might become acquainted with the project if many were let into the secret), and also that the only means of digging was with a wooden knife, spoon, or small tin cup.

At length the tunnel was completed, and we only awaited a suitable night in which to make our escape. We needed a night with no moon, and, if possible, dark and rainy. We had not long to wait, since more than one half of all days and nights at that time were wet and cloudy. While a few were busy getting a number of the boys who could sing to sit near the house from which the tunnel was dug, others gathered about the place and began telling stories, singing, and playing boisterously.

The scheme was to have quite a large number about the house, who should make as much noise as possible to draw away the attention of the guards from any accidental noise which might be made by those who should pass through the tunnel and walk away from the stockade; also by having so many about the house a single person could enter it, crawl through the tunnel and escape without the detection sure to follow if one after another should be seen singly to enter the house and not come out again. Such a



house, which at its best could not contain more than four, would be looked upon with suspicion if a dozen or fifteen men should be received with apparent ease.

At length the "boys" settled down to singing the songs so familiar to our soldier life—the "Red, White, and Blue," "Star-Spangled Banner," "We are Coming, Father Abraham," "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean," etc. The guards remarked that "the Yanks are having a mighty jolly time to-night;" but as we all seemed in good-humor, no opposition was offered to our "enjoyment." More than thirty had entered the tunnel and escaped before I could squeeze myself in; so many were anxious to do the same thing, and it was so essential we should arouse no suspicion by a squabble as to who should go first, that I deemed it best to exercise patience. At length I crawled into the house and down into the tunnel; along its cramped sides and muddy bottom I dragged myself, until there was only two or three feet more to crawl through, and I would be out into the open air and outside the stockade. The tunnel was jammed full of men. In front of me was an Ohio boy; just before him was a young Kentuckian, who had just emerged into the open air; behind me was a big fellow from Illinois, and between us hardly an inch of space. Every nerve was thrilled, every muscle tense; liberty was just ahead of us. The man in front of me had just pushed his head outside the tunnel when I heard the

cry, "Halt! halt!" and the sharp report of a gun. Its flash lighted up the tunnel, for it was directly in front of us; the Ohioan stopped and began to crawl backward, and a reversed action was inaugurated along that whole line of creeping men. In a few moments I was back in the house, muddy outside and sick at heart within. From the Ohio boy ahead I learned the cause of our disaster. The Kentuckian was beside himself with excitement, and instead of creeping carefully away from the stockade until he should be beyond fear of creating an alarm, as soon as he was fairly outside and able to raise himself to an erect posture, he stood for a moment trembling with excitement, then sprang forward with all possible speed. Of course he was instantly seen, ordered to halt, and a bullet sent in close proximity to him brought his short but brilliant (?) career to a close. Oh, how mad we were at the idiot! Indeed, the fact that he was brought back was some consolation to our disappointed souls. That was the last night we slept in "houses." At an early hour the following morning, with a storm of oaths, we were driven from our houses. An inspection of each was made, and when it was discovered that one of them served as the entrance to a tunnel, every house, built with so much care and under so many difficulties, was razed to the ground, and all were placed once more upon a common plane—that of cattle turned into a muddy, shelterless yard, or corral.

During the hour or more in which our men had been escaping through the tunnel, thirty-nine men passed out and got away from the immediate neighborhood of the stockade. Of these one or two were returned that evening, the guards having at once drawn a cordon of men about the prison at a distance of several rods. Very early on the following day every available man was pressed into service, and starting with hounds close to the prison, they sought to follow the fugitives. As a result of the first day of man-hunting, six or eight of our comrades were returned to the stockade—tired, hungry, dejected-looking mortals. Their clothing, only a covering of rags when they left us, was, if possible, now even worse than before from hard contact with stiff briars and the protruding knots of the timber through which they fled.

The second day brought a smaller number, and for a week or two longer a single recaptured captive was returned every day or two.

Of the whole thirty-nine, not one is known to have reached our lines, although Grimes, my companion in the former flight, was absent three weeks.

The previous summer, while at Meridian, I had become acquainted with a Michigan engineer, a man of nearly forty years of age, who had passed much of his life on the frontier and with surveying parties, and in consequence was a thorough woodsman. His name

was Grosvenor. Of all who succeeded in getting away from the pen, we, who were well acquainted with Grosvenor, believed that the probability of his succeeding was greater than that of any one else ; and when day after day passed by and he did not return we felt more and more certain of his success. At length, however, one of the returning fugitives brought back the sad information that he had been drowned in an attempt to cross Pearl River.

Grimes had a most remarkable series of thrilling adventures and hardships. He was almost naked while in prison, and had no blanket at the time of his escape. He succeeded in reaching Black River, twelve miles west of Vicksburg. On the west side of Vicksburg, at a particular place, for several weeks an outpost of Union soldiers had been placed. Their position was well known to the Confederates and to the colored people of the vicinity. Grimes's acquaintance with the colored people and their sympathies, which was a part of his Southern rearing, led him to seek their aid as much as possible, and on the night of his capture he had persuaded one of that race to guide him to the Federal outpost. Unknown to the guide, the Union outpost had been removed during the day a mile down the river, and a party of Confederates had been placed on the east side of the river, opposite the post deserted by the Union men. The negro guided Grimes to a point in sight of the river,



and, fearing instinctively for his own safety, bade him God-speed and turned back. Caution was a marked character of Grimes's nature, and, uttering no sound, he stealthily approached the river. It would have been possible for him to have forded a greater portion if not all of the river. He had entered the river unobserved, and had proceeded a short distance, when an accident called one of the Confederates to the spot; seeing an unknown person carefully threading his way through the cold stream, he commanded him to halt or he would shoot him dead. Flight was impossible, and a few days later Grimes was back with us.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

NATTY—STEWART AXLEY—GEORGE ROBINSON—SER-  
GEANT NICHOLS SENT BACK TO CASTLE MORGAN.

NATTY, the member of a loyal Louisiana battery, of whom mention was made previously, had nearly reached our lines, when he was discovered one evening while passing through a dense wood. On the following morning hounds were placed on his track, and after going eight or ten miles he was overtaken, severely injured by the savage brutes, and recaptured in a badly crippled condition. He was never positively heard from thereafter, and was supposed to have lost his life in another attempted escape.

Stewart Axley, of the Fifty-first Ohio, who had been a prisoner for nearly a year, and was on that account very poorly clad, was one of the first to pass out, and a short distance from the pen fell into the company of G. W. Wells, of the Nineteenth U. S. Infantry. Believing that no organized pursuit would be begun before the following day, they sought the railroad track leading west to Jackson. The clothing of Axley was a tattered shirt without sleeves and a threadbare, ragged pair of pants reaching only below

the knees. The condition of Wells was but little better. They hoped, when they first started on their road to freedom, they could walk at least forty miles the first night. Before they had passed over a fifth of that distance both were nearly stiffened with cold, and only by great exertion could they continue their flight. Daybreak found them less than a dozen miles away from Cahaba. By stratagem they eluded the pursuing dogs, and passed the day most miserably in a stack of rye straw. When darkness permitted them to resume their journey they were faint with hunger, stiff with cold, and so evidently unable to travel until refreshed that, on approaching the first farm-house, they boldly approached it and asked for food and shelter. The owner of the house, a man named Doller, was in sentiment a Union man, though not until he had become fully convinced of their identity did he dare to make known his real feelings. A bountiful supper of sweet potatoes, corn bread, and fresh pork was placed before them, and never before nor since have they been so well pleased with the hospitalities of any mansion. Meeting with so hospitable a reception, they asked and were granted permission to sleep upon the floor. A snow-storm kept them at that place the next day.

In confidence the proprietor of the house told them during the day of his Union principles, but that his son had been conscripted into the Southern army,

and was guarding the prisoners at Meridian. From personal observation, and from the statements of his son, he knew of the miserable condition of the men at Meridian; and reasoning that ordinary humanity demanded their release or some amelioration of their condition, or that death would soon effect their release, he firmly believed that an exchange must soon be made.

In their almost nude condition, and possessed of so small a fund of vitality, he reasoned that at that season of the year it would be an impossibility for them to reach Vicksburg, and urged them, for the double reason of a probable early exchange and their condition, to return to Meridian. Carefully considering his reasons and the apparent honesty of his motives, they at length decided to return with him to that place. On the second morning, giving them all the yams they could carry, the trio went to the nearest railroad station in company with their host, and by the first train were returned to us. Returning northward the following April, Axley was on the *Sultana*, and by the explosion was blown on a piece of the boat far out into the river, and, more dead than alive, was rescued near Memphis.

George F. Robinson, of the Second Michigan Cavalry, succeeded in getting over forty miles away, but was seen by a woman, who quickly called her pack of hounds and overtook him.



What intensely interesting tales were those told truthfully by the men brought back to us! A volume could be filled with statements more startling, more pathetic than the tales written by the novelist; but so many pages have been devoted to the fugitives from Meridian that the experiences of others will not be given.

I must not neglect to mention, as one bright spot in our gloomy life at Meridian, the name of Sergeant Nichols, Confederate Commissary Sergeant, who supplied us with our rations of food and wood.

Sergeant Nichols was a young man of twenty-one or twenty-two years, a native of Mississippi, of fair education, and the only man I met in the Confederacy, save young Beach, who ever manifested to me the least feeling of sympathy for us in our hard treatment, and who expressed a desire to ameliorate our condition. He, however, had no power to carry into effect his good wishes. In conversation with him one day, when I was out for rations, he told me that he had made up his mind to go to his regiment rather than remain at Meridian as commissary for the prison. He always seemed ashamed to be compelled to give us such poor, scanty rations of meat and such villainous stuff for meal. But as that was what was furnished him, he had no choice. As soon as he mentioned going away, giving as his reason that it made his heart ache to see us suffering so much when it was

in the power of the proper officers to do so much better by us than they were doing, I begged of him not to think of going, for he could do us no good by such an act, and we should in all probability fall into the care of one much worse. It was a pleasant afternoon that day, and he and I sat down upon the outside of the stockade for a half hour in conversation upon the matter. I secured his promise that he would remain, though I felt assured that his duty was to him one most irksome. He knew as well as we, and so stated at that time, that men in charge of prisons very rarely had any regard for the welfare or comfort of their captives.

I am sorry to make the statement, but with a desire to deal fairly and without prejudice, I must say that Sergeant Nichols was the first, last, and only man with whom I formed any acquaintance after leaving my first guard who gave any evidence of possessing a kindly interest in us.

In the extended conversation with Sergeant Nichols, I asked him if it was not possible for us to have a larger supply of wood, since we were at the edge of a dense forest, and our men would gladly do all the necessary work in procuring it. "It is no use," he said; "the commander of the prison will not let your men out of the prison to do the work, and will not spare a larger number of our men to do such labor or to guard your men at work. The amount you are

getting is all I can obtain for you. I have tried earnestly, and know."

The water at Meridian was simply abominable. A hole was dug about six or eight feet deep, and when not disturbed for ten or twelve hours would contain nearly a foot of surface water. But only early in the morning would so much be found. During the whole day one man after another would stand in the bottom of the well with a tin cup and dip up the water as it accumulated.

Two or three rods away was the "sink," the hole in which fæces were emptied from several hundred prisoners. The bottom of the sink, filled with water, was on a higher level than that of the well, hence it does not require a very strong imagination to note the close relationship existing between the water of our well and that of the sink, separated by two or three rods of light, sandy soil. No prisoner with us ever saw a cup of clear, clean, palatable water in Meridian, and the quality of the water was an explanation of the severe typhoid fever and chronic diarrhœa seen there.

At length one day, two or three weeks after our houses were torn down, we were surprised by being told that on the morrow we should be sent to Cahaba; and on the following morning we climbed into a lot of old rough cars and again went pounding over the worn-out road from Meridian to Selma.

Always in moving us on the cars, except this single

time, we were told that we were on the way to an exchange depot. For once the usual lie was not told, and a most watchful guard was kept over us. On our journey—somewhere near Demopolis—the wheels under our car became loosened, and at length detached from their position. This permitted the front end of the car to drop to the road-bed, and a quarter of the flooring of the forward portion of the car was detached from its place. Seats were torn up, limbs and bodies bruised, and bones broken. In the confusion George Robinson, mentioned above, and an old-time friend of his, John Corliss, sprang from an open window and started northward. After weeks of weary wandering they reached a point within forty miles of our lines, when their tracks were discovered and followed by the ever-present hounds, those evil geniuses of prison life. They were quickly traced, recaptured, and sent to join us.

A few hours after the accident we reached Cahaba, and once more the hope-destroying gates of the old prison swung open to receive us, and for many of our band opened again only to pass comrades bearing out their dead bodies.

For the first few hours after our return we were besieged by old acquaintances with the questions always eagerly asked of men coming from the outside, "Do you hear anything about exchange?" "What do you hear about the war?" They had long supposed we



were back in the Union lines, and when they were assured to the contrary, could hardly be convinced that we knew as little about the war and the chances for exchange as they themselves did. They were as much shut out from the world as if they had been for months corked up in an immense jug.

In a day or two our little band of three hundred had amalgamated with the great crowd, had squeezed them into closer quarters, had robbed them of a portion of their already far too scanty room ; but in other respects the daily round of their dreary life went on as before.

A large per cent of the mugger gang had gone. The scarcity of new arrivals gave them little opportunity to pursue their fiendish thieving ; their occupation was departed from scantiness of material.

Another cause had robbed their longer residence in Castle Morgan of its pleasure, and that other cause was the presence of the hated " Big Tennessee." Probably not one man in twenty of those in Castle Morgan knew to what an extent the presence of " Big Tennessee" was a thorn in their flesh.

Many of the men we had known in good flesh the summer previous were going about now with the forms of gaunt greyhounds ; they were not sick—they had not been sick at any time ; they had simply drawn from their fund of stored-up fatty tissue until it was nearly all exhausted. W. H. Peacock, who went into Castle Morgan weighing one hundred and ninety-seven

pounds, was never sick an hour during his confinement, and on his return to our lines tipped the beam at a little over eighty pounds. Smith, an Indiana soldier who came to Cahaba with our squad in July, 1864, a robust, well-fed, plump-looking man, though never sick a day, gradually grew thinner and thinner, until, though he ate all he received, he resembled the men advertised as living skeletons and carried about as the adjunct of a menagerie ; and these instances could be multiplied by scores.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

COLD WEATHER AT CAHABA—CONDITION OF THE MEN—  
IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF GLOOM—CONFEDERATE RE-  
PORTS SENT IN TO PRISON—RECRUITING FOR THE  
CONFEDERATE STATES ARMY—NOT A SUCCESS.

RARELY does snow fall in the southern portion of Alabama, but the rainfall of the southern exceeds that of the northern portion of the State, and almost equals that of Florida. More than one half of the winter days of 1864 and 1865 were wet or cloudy. During many nights mud in the prison would be stiffened by the frost.

When the fall of rain continued into the night no special preparations were made for "beds" in those portions of the prison where men were compelled to sleep upon the wet ground. When, however, the evening promised a cessation of rainfall, dozens of busy hands would be seen armed with a chip, a beef rib, tin-plate or frying-pan, scraping the mud off from the spot of earth where they were accustomed to sleep, by courtesy called a bed. After the ground had been properly scraped and cleaned off they would curl down in squads, five or six in a nest, without anything

under or over them, each hugging the one next in front of him in order to keep warm, as hungry, quiet, and contented as could be expected ; the soft mud was sometimes gathered in dishes and cast into the sluice-box beneath the water-closet, but oftener was heaped up in rows beside the untempting beds.

Often could be seen some man threading his way from one part of the prison to another ; and unwilling to step into a pile of the heaped-up mud, he would place a foot, already muddy, upon the ground so carefully and with so much labor cleaned a few moments before ; then a shout or an oath would burst from the lips of the "owner" of that particular piece of earth, "Get out of that ! that's my bed," or, "What in —— are you thinking of to step on to my bed with your feet all mud ? I've been scraping that place for the last half hour to get a chance to sleep to-night."

There never seemed to be anything remarkable to the observer in hearing the speaker state that he had "cleaned the mud off from his bed." It was a common occurrence to hundreds of men ; and we had so long been treated like impounded vicious cattle, that we came to regard such treatment with indifference, and hardly worthy of note. True, at times some one would remark, "Well, what would I have said a year ago if I had been told I would ever come to such a state as this ?" or, "What would my mother do if she could look in here and see me ?"



On one occasion two thin-faced, solemn-visaged boys had been making these stereotyped remarks, when half in soliloquy one exclaimed, "Will the infernal regions be as bad as this?" and his ragged, pinched companion, without even smiling, answered, "It won't be muddy, anyway, and the nights won't be so cold."

When we entered Castle Morgan, in the summer of 1864, nearly all the inmates slept upon the ground.

After several months there were so many inmates there was not room on the ground for all to sleep. Then large wooden frames were made and several tiers of boards spread upon them. This arrangement—called by the men "roosts"—allowed men to be placed in tiers one above another, each tier capable of stowing away twelve to sixteen men. Every "roost" then furnished a habitation for sixty to eighty men.

We found a few roosts when we entered the place, to which others were added, until, if I remember correctly, there were nine in all. This would take from the ground about six hundred and fifty men; the remaining twenty-five hundred men always slept upon the ground.

In some respects the roosts were an improvement upon the ground, as they were not muddy nor very dusty; but as it allowed of men sleeping and living from one to three "thicknesses" above you, and if your "bed" should be on the lower tier it would oc-

casionally happen that you would receive a baptism of water, slops, or something worse from your sick neighbor above you, the roosts were not always a source of unalloyed pleasure.

Had our men been well clothed and well fed their sufferings from cold would have been less ; but nearly all of those who had been longest in Cahaba had been captured in the earlier part of the summer, and were not provided with clothing or blankets ; and by the time winter arrived their shirts were riddled with holes and their pants "out" at the knees and seat. Though probably no one froze to death outright during any night, many were chilled nearly to the point of death, and were rescued only by the most assiduous care of their comrades. One of those who so narrowly escaped was one who was always called "Little Eddie," a mild-mannered, frank-faced boy who belonged to the —th Indiana Infantry. Eddie was a decided favorite with all of our mess, and when, one cold morning, we were ordered as usual into the southern end of the prison to be counted, we were much pained to learn from one of our company that Eddie was past the power of speaking, and perhaps was breathing his last. As soon as possible we hastened to the part of the prison where Eddie usually laid, and found a comrade already there. The patient was lying on his side, drawn up into a little bunch, his knees nearly against his chest, and his head bent for-

ward until it almost touched the knees. An occasional tremor ran through his frame, and slight groans often came from his lips ; but had he been under the influence of a powerful narcotic, he hardly would have been more stupefied.

Gathering him in our arms, we bore him out where the rays of the winter's sun would fall upon him, and borrowing some blankets from our more fortunate comrades, we wrapped him in these ; then one friend, taking a hand or a foot in his own hands, would briskly apply friction for a few minutes, and immediately carry the member to some part of his own person. Others, opening a small space in the blanket, breathed their warm breath directly upon the body ; another gave him warm water as hot as it could be swallowed ; and at one time six kind, sympathetic friends were trying in different ways to coax back the ebbing tide of life.

It was several hours before the victory was positively decided in our favor, and for many weeks poor "Little Eddie" dragged himself about, weakened, shocked by the severe ordeal through which he had passed.

Some, from frost-bite and chill, suffered the loss of the flesh from the toes, and could be observed going about with their naked bones attached to the foot, held only by tendinous chords—the ligaments that bound the bones together ; the number of these unfortunates, however, was small.

None save those who have been thoroughly and desperately homesick, entirely discouraged, always hungry, at night always cold, can have a clear conception of our physical and mental condition during the long, dreary, hope-destroying months that for us marked the fall, winter and spring of 1864 and 1865. Every avenue of escape was most effectually cut off. After our numbers were something over three thousand, very few prisoners were sent to Cahaba; we could occasionally obtain little glimpses of the progress of the war from the new prisoners, so long as such were sent to our prison; but that source of pleasure at length almost completely ceased. No reports of battles in which our arms were victorious were permitted to enter our gloomy stockade. The press of the Confederacy was under a censorship as rigid if not as apparent as is the press of Russia to-day.

Whenever a great battle was fought in which the least shadow of an advantage could be claimed for the Confederacy, papers full of the bright outlook for their cause were sent into the prison; and when perhaps there were good reasons for regarding the arms of the Confederacy victorious, the exultations and boasts and threats of the Southern press knew no bounds. Concerning the truth of these reports, it was utterly impossible for us to judge; hope was overshadowed by fears and despondency, and gloom became a part of every man's being. One example will do as an



illustration of the distorted reports sent in to us. When we heard of the battle of July 22d before Atlanta, we were told that General Hood had out-generalled "Old Billy Sherman" completely; that he had surprised and routed his whole army except a small portion; that this small portion, only by the most desperate fighting and with murderous losses, had barely saved themselves from annihilation; that the "brains of the campaign," General McPherson, had been slain. Some of the Confederate reports stated that he had knowingly ridden to death, setting an example to his men of the desperate courage he desired them to exhibit, and which alone he felt could save them from destruction. Other Confederate reports stated that he *sought* death rather than meet the execrations which he knew would be poured upon his head by a nation indignant and exasperated by the foolhardy campaign to Atlanta.

Afterward, again and again, were we told that the army of Sherman, as a result of that battle, stunned, dazed, their guiding spirit (McPherson) lost, were huddled like sheep in yards, surrounded by the conquering Southrons, who, conscious of their power, were biding their time to make a complete capture or destruction more certain.

Now the facts in the case were these: The Union loss, July 22d, 1864, in the battle before Atlanta, was about thirty-five hundred (Lossing), while the Con-

federates' loss at the same time was nearly three times as great; and their loss in *morale* was such that it was more damaging than the terrible destruction of men. We, however, were never permitted to know the truth, and only the most garbled and distorted statements were printed in their newspapers, and copies of such were sent in to us for perusal.

Always following any alleged defeat of the Union arms an opportunity was given to the prisoners to enlist under the banner of the Confederacy; and though occasionally a man would go outside, take the oath of loyalty to the Confederacy and join their army, such cases, compared with our great numbers and our wretched surroundings, were rare indeed.

Recruits for the Confederate Army were especially sought for at other times, as when a severe cold or wet season for several days had more than ordinarily tested the inflexible will and loyalty of the captives. During the fall of 1864, when Lincoln and McClellan were the candidates of their respective parties for President, the latter gentleman was looked upon by the Confederates as pledged to terminate the war by compromise; this, by them, was understood to be the beginning of their recognition as independent States. They hoped the anti-war party of the North, by electing their candidate, would, at the

polls in November, indirectly accomplish for them the object which so far had not been attained by their armies in the field. Whether they were wrong or right in their estimates is left to the impartial student of the history of those dark days.

On the other hand, should Lincoln be re-elected, they rightly prophesied that the war would be continued; and they could not but foresee that his election would be an indorsement of his administration, and that new force would be given to the cause he represented. The November election at length settled all their doubts and destroyed all their hopes built upon the possible election of General McClellan.

To us, who had Republican proclivities, the Confederate admiration and love for McClellan was a source of amusement. To the few men who espoused the cause of "Little Mac," the decided preference for and cordiality of the enemy for their idol was a surprise that grew to be an annoyance.

Shortly after we learned of the overwhelming majority given to Lincoln, a long, cold rain-storm settled down upon that portion of the South, and continued for a week; the clothing of nearly all the men was in rags, and every drop of falling rain chilled them to the very marrow. To the men who were compelled to sleep on the wet, muddy

ground the period was most trying. Taking advantage of the occasion, a Confederate lieutenant and two Confederate sergeants one day came into the prison to secure recruits for their army among the shivering wretches whom they held captives. Going to the centre of the prison, the lieutenant mounted a box, and in substance addressed his hearers as follows: "Men, the election in the North is over, and I hardly need tell you what that election means to you. It means that there is no hope for you to be exchanged so long as there is a regiment of men in the South who can fire a gun, for so long as we have a regiment of our army left the subjugation of the South will be resisted, the war will be carried on; and so long as the war continues you will not be exchanged. Again and again has our government besought old Lincoln to exchange you, man for man, for our men, but of this we have now no hope.

Your government will not exchange; for some reason they have determined to leave you here to die rather than give us back our men for you.

"Your government has deserted you, and is unworthy any longer of your respect. I am sent here by my government to offer you freedom, warm clothes, plenty to eat, and good warm barracks to shelter you from the storm if you will but swear allegiance to the Confederate States and enlist in the Confederate



Army. Gentlemen—" but his words were drowned in the groans and hisses of his audience ; and while he stood, waiting for the interruption to subside, the box on which he stood was kicked from under him, and seized by a dozen men for kindling wood. Before leaving the prison he managed to inform his hearers that on the morrow he would return with a body of armed men, and accept all who wished to enlist in the Confederate Army.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

A COMPANY OF THIEVES AND MUGGERS ENLIST—GOOD RIDDANCE—FRANK STANLEY TAKES THE OATH TO SAVE HIS LIFE—FOR HIS MOTHER'S SAKE.

PROMPTLY on the morrow the same lieutenant, leading a company of armed men, again entered the stockade, and marching to a portion of the enclosure opposite the gate, halted, while the officer addressed the prisoners: "Men, you have had twenty-four hours to decide whether you would prefer to stay here and pine away your lives for a government that has deserted you—a government composed of a lot of pampered aristocrats who care nothing for you—or to change your allegiance to a government which will give you your liberty, give you good, warm clothing and plenty to eat." Much more in this strain he continued to state, and closed by saying: "If you are willing to go with us, as we march out just step between these two lines of soldiers." About seventy or eighty men, composed mostly of the thieves and muggers of the prison, accepted the invitation, and passing through the gate, were seen by us no more.

One of the most remarkable phases of prison life

was the tenacity and devotion with which our men clung to the cause of the Union. Hearing only the garbled and distorted statements of their guards; never permitted to know the true status of the war; listening to the sophistry of their captors—strange, indeed, was it that their manhood was so rarely shaken. They seemed to have been so filled drinking at the fountain of loyalty that they fainted not under the austerities and hardships that were never absent in the long and weary months of their incarceration. A few Northern soldiers who entered prison with much respect for the Confederacy and its principles changed their opinions after seeing our intensely crowded condition, after feeding upon the wretched food, drinking the polluted water, and shivering with cold for months in a country one of the most densely wooded of the whole South. True, there were some Northern soldiers who had given previous to their capture little thought to the object of the South in seceding, and less to the subject of enlisting in the service of the Confederacy. Like persons born and nurtured within the pale of some religious bodies, they regarded themselves as right, and gave little study to the principles of their opponents. A short residence, however, in this Alabama summer (and winter) resort occasionally led such to consider both their own fundamental political creeds and that of the enemy. The result was that men who had been cool or lukewarm

became positively "hot." Not that the tenets of the new government or those of the old were modified a jot by their incarceration; but the opinions of the men captured certainly were. Let it not be understood that every ragged, dirty, vermin-eaten, shivering wretch to whom a proposition of Confederate enlistment was made would at once pour forth with wild vehemence a philippic against the Confederacy, or with noble dignity deliver a Websterian oration, quoting "Liberty and Union, one and inseparable;" but their willingness to endure the discomforts of body and distress of mind, overclouded as they were by the uncertainty as to how long their hopeless imprisonment might continue, should compare favorably with patriotic utterances the most thrilling, when it is remembered that a Confederate recruiting officer was always near by, was always ready to place their names upon his roll, guarantee them warm clothing, an abundance to eat, a service in some strong Confederate fort supplied with barracks that would shed off the falling rain and shelter them from the raw, sleety winds of a Southern winter, and permit them when off duty to sleep in a room comfortably heated by a stove.

Few persons ever more anxiously dwelt upon and earnestly desired the comforts that were offered them. None ever more peremptorily spurned them.

The other reason why so few men enlisted from our number into the ranks of the enemy was the extreme



bitterness, the fury that such an act aroused among their loyal comrades, and a fear by those who would be willing to desert lest their intentions should be discovered and they be subjected to the hardest treatment before they could be taken outside of the stockade.

If it was known that a comrade intended to "go outside" and take the oath, he would certainly be beaten, knocked down, and cuffed until he could obtain the protection of a guard. This was not always possible ; and woe betide him whose wish to take the oath became known, and who could not obtain for the time the protection desired.

Usually, when a comrade desired to "go outside," he took an officer of the prison a little way aside, and told him he wanted to talk with him privately. This was so common in legitimate matters as not to be regarded with suspicion. As soon as possible he was conducted out, and was never seen in prison again, unless he wished to get some little thing of value left behind ; then he would return to the prison at once, quietly obtain the articles desired, and shortly be called out, nominally for some other cause, but really to join the Confederate Army.

I have seen men shiver all night in their scant clothing, and, unable to sleep from the cold, would doze during a portion of the day ; and if you would mention to them that they could take the oath and

have warm clothing and plenty of food, they would fly into a rage, and perhaps deal a stunning blow to the person who suggested the idea, deeming themselves grossly insulted.

Some, however, swore allegiance to the Confederacy who were as loyal as any soldier living, but who embraced this opportunity as affording them better facilities for escape, or because it gave them the only chance remaining to live. One such person was Frank Stanley, a young man of nineteen years, whose widowed mother lived near Chicago, Ill.

One day Frank came to me and said he wanted to talk with me in confidence ; so we went to a part of the prison where we could be a few feet away from all others, and sat down. I had known the boy ever since I was first a prisoner at Cahaba, and had learned to esteem him as a person of intelligence, good principles—a generous, big-hearted fellow who had left college to enter the Union Army. He had, at the time of his enlistment, two brothers in the army, but previous to his capture one had been killed at Vicksburg and the other had died of some camp disease at Memphis. Frank was the only child now left to his mother, and as they were very dear to each other, he often moaned that his mother should be kept in suspense as to his fate. His shirt had become completely worn out ; his pants were torn off at the knees—perhaps used to bind the sores of some comrade ; his

hat was without a rim ; his shoes were only a thing of the past, and he had had no blanket since his capture.

When I first knew him he was in good flesh and excellent spirits, but had a slight diarrhoea. The scanty food, the raw, cold nights passed in shivering, and the days and weeks of uncertainty had made his limbs and body spare and his face more angular than when we first came together.

With hesitation, showing by his manner that upon his mind was a subject repulsive to him, he told me that he had nearly decided to "take the oath" to the Confederacy and, enter the Rebel army. Said he: "You know what the result will be before many months, if I remain here that long ; and by this step there is a probability of my life being prolonged until I can escape to the Union lines. I have seen my comrades carried out of here one by one, and it is only a simple question in subtraction that decides when my time will come. I have no clothing, my health is getting poorer, and the weather is getting more and more inclement. My mother has already lost two boys, and I am the only one left to aid her in her old age. Now, when I go out, and the 'boys' whom I have learned to respect know that I have taken the oath and curse me as a traitor, won't you tell them that I hate the Confederacy, and only take this course as a means of saving my life ? I will desert

at the first opportunity, and I wish I could annihilate a Confederate for every word uttered in taking the oath."

I could not ask him to change his determination. I saw as clearly as he what it meant for him to attempt to remain in prison during the whole cold, wet winter; and when a few days after he slyly pressed my hand before he went out, I cheered him with the assurance that I would do the same thing were I in his circumstances. In many particulars Frank was a remarkable boy. He was a person possessed of rare conversational power, and with the few with whom he became intimate it was often a delicious treat to listen to his good ideas clothed in rich, captivating language.

An anxiety and sympathy and love for his widowed mother, that was beautiful in its tenderness, often showed itself in his remarks; and, too, his mother must have been a noble person, for his frequent quotations of the precepts she had impressed upon him—had made a part of him—mirrored a refined nature and an intellect of much power.

Another marked characteristic of the boy was his strong, unselfish patriotism. Patriotism may be innate; the tiny germ may have been implanted in the soul of the being at its creation; but certain it is the attribute is so moulded by environment that, like conscience, it is largely a creature of education. It is the result of thought, of appreciation of the beauties,



the benefits, the lofty principles, the virtues of one's country.

I have listened to effusions delivered at latter-day camp-fires, in which the patriotism of the volunteer in the Rebellion was painted as always of the highest, purest, and most noble character ; but a moment's consideration of the subject will convince any one that patriotism is the creature of instinct and intelligence, and is nobler in proportion as the element of intelligence preponderates. The studies of Frank, his education, his home life, the teachings of his sensible parents, his college life, had rendered his love of country a strong passion, which influenced every important act in his military experience ; and, like the vast majority of those who suffered with him, his patriotism was intensified by the misfortunes of his captivity. His intellect was one of uncommon activity, and his thoughts were those of men of mature age. Possessed of strong convictions, his earnestness made more lasting the thoughts that flowed from his lips as easily as water flows from the fountain. Many of the subjects he used to discuss with a charm rarely excelled have passed from memory ; but in later years I have often recalled his foreshadowing of the G. A. R. and the Loyal Legion, the latter of which would have been painful to his observation.

In his college days he had been a member of a college society, and recalling the fact as he sat in collo-

quy with a few friends one day, he remarked: "When the war is over there will be an organization of those who shall survive this war for the Union, whether we are to be victorious or defeated. A motive similar to that which leads men who have been associated in colleges to form societies commemorative of their efforts will lead our survivors to form similar societies. What a glorious order it will be—how strong the bond of union between men who have welded their friendship in the hot flames of battle! The distinctions of rank that war makes a necessity between men otherwise equals let us hope will never appear there. Some might urge as a reason for two separate societies—one of officers, the other of privates—that the commissioned men would be more careful of their membership; but it would be as practicable to exclude objectionable men from one society as from the other.

"There is no natural line of demarcation that should in civil life be drawn by any society between our respectable comrades. In the North to-day earnest, unselfish men beseech civilians to enlist, without regard to rank or remuneration. Rightly they place the duty of service to our country above mercenary consideration or pride in title. There is too much at stake to let rank influence our actions to-day; and these pleadings of to-day should not be forgotten in the future.

"But a strong objection against two societies would

be that they would tend to perpetuate a class feeling that should be obliterated as soon as possible, when the classes are no longer necessary.

"A society based upon rank savors too much of caste to flourish in Democratic America ; it would be at home in India, it might meet with favor in monarchical countries, but it should never become acclimated and feel at home in the United States—certainly not as an outgrowth of our armies, into which so many men have entered from motives of pure patriotism, and with no thought or selfish consideration for the wages and comforts that rank could give. The only prerequisite for admission to that society should be the fact that those who shall seek fellowship be reputable men, and stood shoulder to shoulder with us in the struggle that shall win or lose the most precious inheritance of humanity, the last hope of a free government that may come to mankind. Doubtless there will be organizations composed only of men of a single Department. The Army of the Potomac, and Sherman's army, and men who have been prisoners, may be branches of the main body, but never separated from it—one never better or more exclusive than another. Any distinctions founded upon rank now held would only keep alive a feeling natural to men who have entered the army as we have—a feeling inimical to fraternity."

Poor Stanley ! what his fortunes, what his fate, is a

sealed book ; no word ever came in after years regarding him. Whether he attempted to escape and was recaptured and executed ; whether he was captured by our own army before he could escape ; whether he died wearing Confederate gray or lived to reach home and died, or lived, perhaps may never be known by those who remember him with more than an ordinary interest ; but this is certain, those who knew him well will recall him as a soldier of a high type, and one whose circumstances in advance pardoned his action.

In 1887 an Indiana soldier who had enlisted into the Confederate Army from Andersonville applied for a pension ; he offered as a reason for his having enlisted in the Confederate Army that he feared death from hardships if he should remain in the prison, and that by enlisting he might escape to our army. He succeeded in making his escape, returned to his own regiment, and did good service during the remainder of the war. It was decided by the Pension Bureau that the fact of his voluntarily enlisting, while he was a Union soldier, to bear arms against the United States, constituted him a deserter, notwithstanding the causes which led to it, the expressed determination to return to his own regiment, and the fact of his having done so ; and he was thereby debarred from the rights he otherwise would have had.

Men who, twenty-three years ago, thought no indig-



nity too severe to inflict upon those who were willing to "take the oath" to the Confederacy feel less vindictive to-day toward those who did so solely for the selfish purpose of saving their lives for themselves; and I aver the ruling of the Pension Bureau would not meet the approval of the men who, from personal experience and observation, knew the wretched surroundings and the higher motives of such men as the Indianian named or the noble boy, Frank Stanley.

## CHAPTER XXX.

SERGEANT OWENS—ESCAPES AND IS RECAPTURED—BEGINS A TUNNEL—TEDIOUSNESS OF THE TASK.

THAT men in such a place and with such gloomy prospects should constantly think of plans by which they might regain their liberty would be but natural, even if they were of the most meek and submissive kind; but that men who had been captured, as had so many of those in Confederate prisons, under circumstances that stamped them as the bravest, the most daring and reckless, should chafe and fret and plot for freedom, would be inevitable. Every point about the prison was studied from all directions by hundreds of men anxious to find some weak spot that might offer even a possibility of escape.

Why should they not seek to fly from a place so dreary and hope-destroying? The days were wet and gloomy, the nights were dark and cold, <sup>s</sup> hunger was ever present; melancholy hung over us like a spectre from the realms of Pluto.

Such surroundings could bring to our comrades but two results: in one class they slowly crushed

out every hope ; in another they awakened resolutions of a most desperate character.

Among those of the latter class was a sergeant of an Ohio regiment named Owens, who had, before entering the army, resided at Sandusky. The history of Owens before coming to Castle Morgan I have never been able to learn, and since the war he was last heard from at St. Louis, Mo.

Owens, some time in the fall of 1864, had arrested the attention of the prison officials, and for some attempted escape had been taken out from the prison to the shop of the village blacksmith, and on his legs heavy iron shackles were riveted.

The shackles, like those fastened upon Grimes when we were brought back after our recapture in August, were "home-made," the workmanship of an unskilful artisan, rough and unwieldy, composed of but two links, each about fifteen inches long, and two rings to encircle the ankles. To rivet together the two parts of the rings about his ankles, it was necessary for him to stand upon the anvil. By tying a string to the links, where they were united, Owens could walk slowly and painfully about the prison, heralding his footsteps with the continual "clank, clank" that warned the guards of his approach, and taught them to regard him as a man of desperate purposes.

But for only a short time did the sergeant wear his

fetters continuously. With a knife, the edge of which had been changed to a rude saw, he carefully cut the rivets so they could be removed and his shackles laid aside. As soon as darkness came he would remove his fetters and wander about the prison, examining, over and over again, its every portion. At last he decided to attempt an escape through the top of the water-closet. The water-closet, as has been mentioned elsewhere, was a room built against the side of the prison, having a doorway between the prison and the closet. The walls, floor, and cover of the water-closet had been made of unseasoned two-inch planks.

As the planks became dry they shrank, leaving wide cracks into which it was possible to push the fingers far enough to gain a strong hold. Noticing this, Owens waited for a favorable opportunity.

On the night following the Presidential election in November, 1864, a fierce thunder-storm visited Cahaba. It was such an occasion as the sergeant had desired. Freed from his shackles, he passed into the water-closet. A guard was stationed at the door of this closet at all times; it was his duty to notice every person who might pass him, and to see that no one attempted escape at that point. A comrade engaged the attention of the guard by offering for sale a pair of shoes. The mechanical productions of the Confederacy were less neat and attractive than those of



the Northern States, and the superior workmanship of the Northern soldier's article, offered for sale, attracted the Confederate, and awakened his cupidity. Anxious to possess them, he forgot his duty, and for many minutes permitted his attention to be drawn away.

The sergeant pushed his fingers into the cracks between the planks, and hurriedly climbed up the side of the room to the roof. Loud peals of thunder and a heavy fall of rain drowned the noise that would have attracted the attention of the guard on a stiller night. A plank from the roof was carefully pushed from its place, and through the opening thus made he escaped to the upper side of the roof; the plank was replaced, and Owens dropped to the ground. The stockade was only a few feet away, but a walk had been built near its top, on the outside, and armed sentries were stationed there, with orders that portend death to an escaping prisoner. The night befriends him; the inky darkness shuts him out from the vision of the guards, while he watches their dim forms placed between him and the sky. A favorable opportunity presents itself; the face of the nearest guard is turned away for a few moments, and risking limb and life, the sergeant stealthily climbs up the inside of the stockade, carefully steps upon the walk of the guards, suspends his body beneath it, hanging with his hands for a moment, and drops lightly to the ground.

He has aroused no suspicion, and the greatest difficulty has been surmounted. Two or three rods away is the Alabama River; stealing carefully away from the stockade, he reaches the river-bank and plunges in; the current carries him below the town, and after a long struggle in the cold water he reaches the eastern shore.

His objective point is Nashville, and at once he starts northward. He fears the hounds may be placed upon his track, and after a few miles he plunges into the river again and swims to the western bank, a few miles farther on. Determined, if possible, to throw the dogs from his track, he swam the Alabama the third time, and at daybreak sought shelter in a dense wood.

The heavy rain and his repeated crossings of the river have obliterated all traces of the course which he has taken, and he can now pursue his journey with little fear of pursuit, guarding only against the dangers before him. He had continued his flight several nights, subsisting sometimes upon food gathered in the fields, sometimes confiding in the negro slaves, and obtaining food from them. Laying by a portion of the day, and travelling only through the woods, he travelled onward. Compelled by circumstances, he was sometimes forced to make a meal of raw peanuts that had only recently been gathered. On one occasion this indigestible food gave him a severe colic,

and to seek relief from the pain he went to the house of a negro slave, situated near the residence of the planter. Here he was discovered and captured by the planter, and returned by rail to Cahaba, where he was recognized by the prison authorities as the restless captive whom they had placed in irons a few weeks previous. Again he was manacled, this time more securely than before, and returned to the common prison, where he was more closely watched than ever.

Those by whom Owens was intimately known recognized in him a person of superior intelligence, ability, and courage, but to the masses he cared little to unbosom himself, and by these, as he moved with discomfort about the crowded prison, moody in manner and distinguished by his fetters from the majority of his companions, he was regarded as a fanatic, possessed with a mania to escape, and not a few spoke of him among themselves as "Crazy Owens." This cognomen, as will appear at a later period of our story, was most damaging to his influence at a critical hour, in the height of an insurrection organized by the prisoners.

Shortly after his return he gathered a few trusted companions about him, and sought freedom by tunneling. On the east side of the prison, inside of the brick wall, but within ten or fifteen feet of the stockade, was a small room used by the Confederates, some-

times for a guard-house for their own soldiers and sometimes as a commissary room, in which meal was placed. The floor of this room was about two feet higher than the floor of the common prison. A door opened from this room to the common prison, and when there were either Confederates confined in the guard-house, or commissaries placed there for safe-keeping, a Confederate was placed at the door. The wall of the room was brick, and through the wall, beside the door, below the level of the doorstep, was a small opening for ventilation of the space beneath the guard-room floor. To Owens the possibility of getting under the guard-house floor and beginning a tunnel suggested itself. This plan he confided to Ira Collins, of the One Hundred and Fourteenth Illinois, and Alfred Dodd, a drummer-boy of the Ninety-third Indiana, and four others. Dodd was a very small boy, and the only one who could easily pass through this hole in the brick wall. Collins stole a sack from the commissary to be used for carrying the dirt dug out of the tunnel. As soon as it was dark enough for them to begin their work, three or four of the seven in the scheme would throw blankets over their shoulders and approach the guard at the door of the guard-room, standing in such a position as to obstruct his view of the little opening through the wall near the guard-room door. This awakened no suspicion in the mind of the sentinel, as it was



common for the prisoners to converse with guards on the inside of the prison. This intercourse between captor and captive was as much desired by guards as by prisoners. The Northern men often brought into prison articles that had become scarce in the South, and an exchange of such articles for tobacco, sweet potatoes, "goobers" (peanuts), or wheat bread was a pleasure to the Confederate and a necessity to his captive. If the Yankee had nothing to exchange to gratify his physical hunger, he could allay his thirst for news of the war by rumors retailed by the sentinel. If the sentinel was a stanch Confederate it was a gratification to him to repeat the stories of Confederate victories always published in the journals of "Dixie." If, however, he had been unwillingly forced into the Confederate service, he experienced a melancholy pleasure in listening to the sentiments so often uttered by the men whom he unwillingly held in duress. To the plotters it mattered little what the sentiments of the guard might be, so that his attention was drawn from the opening through which Dodd passed to and from his dangerous work. As soon as the drummer-boy observed his comrades in position to screen him from the observation of the sentinel, he crawled through the little opening, and with a knife and tin dish began to work upon his tunnel.

Into the bag furnished by Collins he would place a few quarts of dirt, and carefully pass it out to a

comrade, who, secreting it under his blanket, would bear it to the water-closet, and pour it through the "seat" into the stream of water below, where it was carried beyond the stockade and into the Alabama. When the sack was filled again, another comrade would secrete it beneath his blanket and repeat the action of his predecessor. Prudence required that the work should be divided between all, lest the frequent entrance to the water-closet of the same person should awaken the suspicions of a vigilant sentry. The progress of the work was slow, and before its completion another scheme for the liberation of all the inmates of Castle Morgan, originating with another prisoner, overshadowed this, and at length led to its abandonment. The originator of this new scheme was Hiram Solon Hanchette, a captain in the Sixteenth Illinois Cavalry.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

CAPTAIN HANCHETTE—PERSONAL APPEARANCE AND HISTORY—ENTRANCE TO CASTLE MORGAN—SUGGESTS a PLAN FOR ESCAPE—HIS LIEUTENANTS—MART BECKER—CULP—COLLINS—RUSH.

CAPTAIN HANCHETTE had been captured about November 23d, 1864, in company with a small number of men belonging to the brigade of Colonel Horace Capron. At the time of his capture he was Acting Assistant Adjutant-General of the brigade. Capron's Brigade was then scouting on the Waynesboro Pike, twenty miles from Columbia, Tenn., and an equal distance from any support. Here it was briskly attacked by Forrest's cavalry and lost thirteen men captured; among these were Captain Hanchette and several wounded. That a true history of Captain Hanchette's connection with the insurrection, and a just estimate of the character of the man himself, might be given, the author, to add to his personal knowledge, has sought information from many sources.

Previous to enlistment, he was an attorney, practic-



CAPT. H. S. HANCHETTE.





ing law at Woodstock, McHenry County, Ill. From that place he entered the United States service, being commissioned a captain in Company M. The date of his enlistment was November 4th, 1862; the date of his commission as captain was May 19th, 1863. He was promoted and commissioned as major December 21st, 1864, to rank as such from June 8th, 1864. His promotion then was given him three or four weeks after his capture, and for that reason he was never mustered in as a major. This fact explains why by some of his acquaintances he is spoken of as a captain and by others as a major.

At the time of his entrance to Castle Morgan, he presented the appearance of a person in the full maturity of manhood. His age was thirty-nine years; his height was five feet seven and one half inches; hair dark, but thin on the crown; eyes dark, searching, and intelligent; skin clear and ruddy; face clean-shaven. His form was compact and betokened much physical strength. In speech his words were not profuse, but left an impression upon those who observed him closely, and he possessed a reserved power ready to be used when an occasion of sufficient importance should call it forth. He inspired those with whom he was associated in the plot for insurrection with an unquestionable confidence in his manly courage and almost superhuman boldness. By them he is remembered as one who, after carefully weighing a fearful

responsibility, was willing to assume it, if there was a reasonable probability that by so doing the condition of his comrades might be bettered; and a few weeks after his capture, when the attempt at the liberation of his imprisoned companions had been made and had failed, he rendered the name of "Solon Hanchette" forever glorious by positively refusing to ameliorate his own punishment by betraying the identity of his associates. Some intelligent persons have conjectured that he was willing to be captured. It has been asserted that he had long contemplated, while doing duty in the field, a project for the liberation of the prisoners in the crowded camps of the Confederacy. There is no foundation for such an opinion; but, on the other hand, there is positive testimony that he determined never to enter a large prison if it could be avoided.

He remained with the little squad from Capron's Brigade for three or four days, and to one of them—Ezra C. Spencer, of the Eighth Michigan Cavalry—he expressed his determination to escape at the earliest possible opportunity. A cordial friendship sprang up between Hanchette and Spencer from the first, and an informal compact was entered into between them, that so long as they were permitted to remain together the two should be partners in any attempt at escape.

After a few days Captain Hanchette was separated

from Spencer and his comrade, and the two did not meet again until they arrived at the prison at Meridian, Miss. In the mean time the Confederates had captured some steamboats on the Cumberland River, the crews of which were citizens, and placed these citizens in the same prison with Captain Hanchette. No possibility of escape came to the captain, so carefully was the collection of prisoners guarded, and believing that the chances of getting away and returning to his command would be more difficult with each move into the Confederacy, without losing sight of his first determination, he decided to avail himself of another possible way to freedom. In the phrase of archery, he determined to "add another string to his bow." He reasoned that citizens would not ordinarily be held as prisoners of war, and believing that the citizen crews of the boats would be soon returned to our lines, he exchanged his officer's clothing for a citizen's suit, shaved off his heavy brown mustache, and assumed the rôle of a civilian captured on a boat. His vigilance, however, was never for a moment relaxed, his eyes and ears were always open, his muscles always ready to grasp any opportunity, or to spring for the liberty that might present itself even for a moment. Four weeks later found him at Meridian, but so changed by the loss of his mustache and shabby suit of citizen's clothing that he was with difficulty recognized by Spencer. Here, on Christmas eve, sit-



ting by their little fire in the stockade, at Meridian, while a drizzling rain saturated their garments, the two men recounted their experiences while separated and together discussed the plans for escape that seemed most feasible. Early in January all Northern prisoners, civil and military, were removed from Meridian to Cahaba, and but a few days had elapsed before Hanchette had matured a plan that was intended to release not only himself, but every prisoner held at Castle Morgan. The nearest point where Union troops were stationed was at Pensacola, Fla., distant from Cahaba on a straight line less than a hundred and fifty miles. In the plan of Captain Hanchette this was to be the objective point. At Selma, less than ten miles north, was a Confederate arsenal containing enough arms to fully arm every Union soldier confined in Castle Morgan, and as much artillery as could be used. The strip of country between Selma, Cahaba, and Pensacola had never been overrun by the armies of either the Union or the Confederacy, and it was reasonable to suppose that it was abundantly stocked with mules and horses to mount all who were able to ride, and contained enough vehicles to transport all of the sick who were not too ill to be transported. The country about Cahaba had been settled for over forty years, and was one of the richest in the State. From it, it was intended to collect enough food and forage to supply the refugees until they could reach their

friends. There were very few troops in the vicinity of the prison or at Selma. All the cavalry in the State was in its northern and eastern portion, so far away that many days must necessarily be consumed before they could overtake the fleeing captives. A small number of Confederate infantry might be spared from Mobile, but these would not equal in numbers the men from Cahaba, and many hours, perhaps days, would elapse before they could push out to intercept them. These were the considerations which Hanchette presented to his companions, as he sought their co-operation in the contemplated plot for liberty. His plan, briefly outlined, was to capture the prison guard and their battery, march to Selma and arm all, then march overland to Pensacola, taking from the arsenal at Selma, in addition to guns and rifles and small arms, enough artillery to give that arm of the service a proper representation in the brigade to be formed from the released captives. It was believed that enough horses could be captured between Cahaba and Selma and in the vicinity of Selma to furnish the animals necessary to draw the guns and caissons. With these provided, small parties, headed toward Pensacola, could gather in enough horses to furnish a respectable contingent of cavalry, if not mount all able-bodied men, and enough vehicles to carry all who were unable to walk, and feed for men and animals. As Cahaba and Selma were on the

west side of Alabama, and Pensacola was on the east of that river, a crossing should be made, probably best done at Selma, as a ferry-boat was always at that place. Several large steamboats were used in navigating the Alabama, and should by chance one or more of these be captured at Selma, they could be utilized in carrying the prisoners more than half the distance toward the Florida town. It was thought that a few men, well mounted and exchanging horses at plantations where convenient, could ride through to Pensacola, inform the commander there, and have a detachment of mounted men sent out to meet the fugitives on their way, and aid them in their flight. If the Union captives could overpower and capture the small guard at Cahaba, and a hundred men could hurry on to Selma and gain a foothold there, they had every reason to believe that success would crown their efforts. If lives were sacrificed in the undertaking, the loss might not exceed the deaths that would result from remaining confined at Castle Morgan. After a careful consideration of all the elements entering into the totality of the project, the probable small number of Confederates at Selma and vicinity, the small amount of troops that could be sent against them from other parts of the State, if the highway were passable, the few days that might reasonably be expected to suffice for them to reach Pensacola, and, on the other hand, the certainty that no release, ex-

change, or parole could come to them till the close of the war; the possibility, yea the probability, judging from the meagre information to be gathered only from the Southern papers, that the contest would be prolonged through another summer; the certainty that the death-rate in this prison (crowded as it was far beyond any other prison in the South) would in the following summer exceed any mortality known in the history of prisons—all these considerations, in the opinion of the writer, placed the scheme among those that are based upon good reasons, and such as would have received the encouragement of prudent, energetic military men. The legal education of Captain Hanchette made him fully aware that the repudiation of his military rank and the pretense of being a citizen was a violation of the most firmly settled rules of war, and the fact of discovery would almost certainly lead his captors to inflict some form of punishment. But in extenuation and apology for this act of his, it should be remembered that deception within certain limits is one of the arts of war.

While it is probable that the authorities of either army would feel compelled to publicly rebuke such a violation of the rules of war as was committed by Captain Hanchette, there is little doubt that personally they would consider such an act by a friend as hardly worthy of being called a "moral obliquity." Like many other deviations from what is



right, the act is considered by the masses as "sharp practice" when it succeeds, and only becomes a crime when it falls short of success. If the plan could be carried to a favorable termination it would earn for Hanchette a national fame. He would be the greatest hero of the war, and in thousands of homes the mention of his name would bring to eyes the tears of emotion and gratitude for his instrumentality in restoring to wives and children and parents loved ones who for months had been mourned as though buried alive. He would justly be regarded as by far the most successful organizer and fortunate leader of such a plot known to the history of war, and, indeed, taking into account all the surroundings, his position would be unique in the annals of modern warfare. Having decided upon the course that should be pursued, he carefully selected as his assistants a few in whose fidelity, prudence, courage, and good sense he could rely. Those who had been for any length of time confined in military prisons of the South had observed that in every prison were confined some men who in every possible way courted the favor of their guards. These sycophants were sometimes rewarded by the prison officials for their fawning acts, and were always ready to debase themselves, trusting to the possible rewards that might follow.

They would even worm themselves into the confidences of their comrades that they might become pos-

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sessed of information which, repeated to their costodians, would win for them a smile of approbation. In many cases a long acquaintance was necessary to discover their servility ; so, after selecting two or three comrades, Hanchette was obliged to depend upon their judgment in the choice of the few only to whom his purposes could be made known. One of his first confidants, after Spencer, was Sergeant Owens. This prisoner's record, which was easily learned from his companions and from the prison guards, at once prepossessed the captain in his favor, and only a few days elapsed after his entrance into Castle Morgan ere he formed the acquaintance of the sergeant.

Cautiously broaching the subject in which he was so deeply interested, he found in Owens one fully in accord with his own ideas, and from him he received many practical suggestions, the result of his own adventures, and his longer experience as a captive.

Another young man in Castle Morgan, on whom nature had placed her decoration which marked him a nobleman, was Mart Becker, a private in some Wisconsin regiment. By his partner in Castle Morgan, George W. Culp, I am told that Becker was captured during an engagement, and at the time of his capture, perceiving that the colors of his regiment were likely to fall into the hands of the enemy, he tore the flag from its staff and secreted it beneath his clothing. Embracing the first opportunity when darkness shield-

ed him from the vision of his guards, he carefully wound the flag about his body, underneath his undergarments, and thus conveyed it to Cahaba. Here the same vigilant care to keep his possession a secret was exercised by Becker, and his devotion was rewarded by success. Months after, while crossing the Black River, in the rear of Vicksburg, he had the pleasure of unfurling it, and under its folds marching into the lines of his friends. Possessed of a powerful frame, a clear, intelligent blue eye, a face that beamed with manliness and courage, he quickly arrested the attention of Captain Hanchette, and a brief acquaintance strongly confirmed the opinion which the Illinois officer had instinctively formed.

As early as was prudent after their brief acquaintance he suggested the possibility of a general prison delivery, and learned that Becker was willing to risk his life in any reasonable undertaking. In a later interview he laid before the Wisconsin comrade the project which he had proposed to Owens and others, and from that hour Becker became a trusted ally. Through Becker's recommendation Culp also was admitted into the conspiracy.







JACOB W. RUSH.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

JACOB W. RUSH—A ROUGH JOKE IS THE MEANS OF HIS  
BEING AMONG THE CONSPIRATORS—SERGEANT DIL-  
LON, OF NINTH ILLINOIS CAVALRY—D. M. MAXON, OF  
SECOND MICHIGAN CAVALRY—HOW MEN FACED WHAT  
SEEMED ALMOST CERTAIN DEATH.

ANOTHER of Hanchette's party owed his association with the conspirators to a rough joke practiced upon him by a thoughtless friend. He had been picking the ever-present vermin from his only shirt, and when the hateful duty had been performed, stood up and was drawing the garment over his head. At the time he was standing near the "dead line" on the inside of the prison. A spirit of boyish mischief impelled a friend who noticed him just as his head was hidden in the shirt to give him a push, and he fell sprawling over the "dead line." He knew the danger of his position in an instant, and tore the garment from his head. The guard, perhaps half in jest, sprang toward him and seemed determined to transfix him with his bayonet. The prisoner, a small, black-haired bright-eyed, boyish soldier, grasped the bayonet plung-

ing toward him, and almost with the quickness of lightning turned it away from his own body, and pushing it deeply into the earth, sprang like an athlete backward from the dangerous locality. It chanced that both Hanchette and Becker were standing near by, and were witnesses of the boy's coolness and pluck. As he stood before them naked to the waist, they noticed further the scars made by a bullet that had passed completely through his body, and carelessly inquiring from one who seemed to be an old acquaintance, they learned that he had not been a "skulker" during the three years of his service. The friend who had known him long related to Hanchette how the boy had enlisted in the Third Ohio Cavalry early in 1861, but had been demanded by and returned to his parents on account of his extreme youth; how a few months later, with their consent, he had again entered the same regiment, had participated in the pursuit of Zollicoffer through Kentucky, the battle of Pittsburgh Landing, siege of Corinth, the battles of Iuka, Bardstown, Perryville, Stone River (near which he was wounded through the lung), and other engagements; how at a later period he had been wounded in the knee, and later had served as a courier, during which service he had been captured, after a nine-mile chase, while bearing dispatches to General Rousseau. The name of the boy was Jacob W. Rush. The history given by his friend only impressed Hanchette more favorably

and seeking his acquaintance, a short time later, both Becker and Hanchette urged him to join in the attempt to be made for freedom, and at once he accepted and entered into its spirit with all his energetic nature. Sergeant Dillon, of the Ninth Illinois Cavalry, also played an important part in the councils of the conspirators. For two years he had served in his regiment under the successful raider, Grierson, and later under the hard fighter, General Ed. Hatch. His military training had been such as familiarized him with danger and rendered him a valuable addition to the band that solicited his companionship. He had been captured only a few weeks previously, while reconnoitring the advancing forces of Hood, and shortly after he and his companions had dashed upon a weakly guarded portion of the Confederate column and captured the headquarters train of General Chalmers. In committing these reminiscences to history I should convey an incorrect impression if they led the reader to believe that Hanchette recruited a major portion of the men who were to serve in the daring effort for liberty. Several of those who became his valuable assistants were as active and earnest and careful in selecting proper men for the dangerous work as was the one who first definitely proposed the plan. Through the influence of Owens, Collins, his trusted assistant in the tunnel scheme, consented to become an actor in the tragic play that took place a few nights later, and



through the persuasion of Becker, Spencer, and others, several of the most reliable men in the compact were added to the party. Nor should an impression be left that only the most daring in the prison were admitted to the plot. There was no man among all those in Castle Morgan who was willing to hazard more, to engage in work the most desperate and daring, if it but offered a reasonable prospect of success, than Grimes, the Virginian. Careful inquiry into the history of many would show that with us, in Castle Morgan, were men who would face any danger, involving even death itself, without fear or faltering. During the engagement at Wyatt, Miss., in 1863, the Ninth Illinois Infantry, in order to dislodge the enemy from a strong position, made a charge and were repulsed with heavy losses. Later, when darkness shut off all vision beyond a few rods, General Ed. Hatch determined to again assault the position. He ordered a detail of ten men and a sergeant from the Ninth Illinois Cavalry ; these reported to him, by his order dismounted. To Sergeant Orton the general gave the command to lead his men over the same ground where a few hours before the Ninth Infantry had been beaten back by a withering storm of lead. The sergeant, startled by the surprising order, asked the general if he had understood aright, and was given the order a second time. " But, general, will any come back alive ?" asked the subaltern. " Perhaps not, sergeant. I wish

to draw their fire to know their strength before making another charge. It is better to sacrifice ten men than a thousand ;” and in face of what seemed almost certain death, the resolute sergeant and his men, who had heard all, ascended the little hill and drew upon themselves the fire of the enemy. Some of these men, too, were in Castle Morgan. When the Confederate General Hood decided to attack General George H. Thomas, at Nashville, in the fall of 1864, he added first to this command a portion of Dick Taylor’s army. The army of Hood then numbered about fifty thousand men. The force of Thomas at Nashville numbered thirty thousand, and he had an equal number elsewhere under his command, but too distant to be made immediately available. The great problem then with Thomas was how to delay the advancing forces of Hood until he could call in his distant troops and have forwarded to him Union troops from other military departments. Early in December a pontoon bridge was thrown across the Tennessee River at Florence, over which the Confederate general was to march his troops. The hope of Thomas was in delaying his enemy. Volunteers were quietly called for from the ranks of the Second Michigan Cavalry to destroy the Confederate pontoons. The gravity of the situation was made known to them. If they can succeed in destroying the bridge and delay the advance of the impetuous Hood, even for a day, the gratitude

of a nation will be due them, and their fame shall descend to their children. If, however, the fortunes of war shall deliver them into the hands of their enemies, death upon the gallows as spies may be their fortune, or they may be entombed alive in one of the great Southern prisons with an unknown fate before them from which stout-hearted men might well shrink back. Their patriotism is appealed to, and this decides their course. Only six men could be used, but half of the regiment was ready to go. At midnight they bade their comrades adieu, and in two log canoes started on their perilous errand. An old citizen was impressed into the service as guide. The strong current of the river carried them swiftly beyond their own lines and into the lines of the Confederates. In the sharp breaks, the whirling eddies, and the projecting rocks of Mussel Shoals their unsteady canoes were nearly swamped, and several times all were thrown from them headlong into the cold water. At the point where the Confederates have built their bridge a long island is in the centre of the river. The pontoon stretches from the shore to the island, a trestle bridge extends from the other side of the island to the shore. Intentionally, or as the result of ignorance of the situation, their guide leads them into the channel spanned by the trestle. An attempt to destroy the trestle is worse than useless, and gliding beneath the structure, guarded by sentinels above, lighted by bright camp-

fires at either end, they steal silently through the armies of the enemy bivouacked upon both banks of the river. A few miles below they release their guide, and avoiding Confederate camps and scouts, reported the following night to their command. A second detail is called for, and, though more conscious of the suffering from wet clothing in a chill winter night, more conscious of the danger to be encountered from vigilant sentries and bright fires, nearly all the same men attempt the perilous duty. No citizen guide is needed this time. A day later they start again. As they approach the pontoon a straggling train of Confederate army wagons is crossing the bridge. The two canoes, which up to this moment had been side by side, separate and dart toward the portion of the bridge where they reason the lines may be attached. A man stands in the bow of each boat with a sharp hatchet. They expect to cut the ropes and float the greater part down the river. A bright light glares from the banks at each end of the pontoon; armed guards are standing by these camp-fires; a single wagon has just passed over; every muscle is tense, and every nerve thrills with intense excitement. Swiftly glide the frail boats nearer. Every eye is strained to catch sight of the great ropes that hold the pontoon against the swift current. A single blow from the heavy hatchet completely severs one rope, but their boat is overturned and lost, and they save their lives



only by clinging to the pontoon. They hope fortune may yet permit them to escape, but at daybreak they are discovered. The men in the other boat do not detect their rope until it has caught the man in the bow under the chin and hurled him into the water. One of his companions, Sergeant Maxon, strikes the receding line with his hatchet, but at such a disadvantage as to only partially sever it, and enough of it remains to prevent destruction to the pontoon. A moment later this boat is overturned and scrapes beneath the floating bridge. Chance carries its occupants close beside it, and clinging to its side they float through the camp of the enemy, the water of the cold river chilling them to their vitals. Two miles below they are cast upon an island and there they empty the boat of its water, wring their clothing, and hasten to escape from the presence of the enemy. The following day all are captured. To their captors they explain satisfactorily the cause of their being away from their own command, and when questioned as to the attempted destruction of the pontoon, deny all knowledge of it. Accident and stratagem save the lives of the three captured on the pontoon. All these fearless fellows are in Castle Morgan, though not numbered with the insurrectionists. But why single out more? What was true of the courage and valor of the men whom we have named was true of scores of men confined in Castle Morgan, but it was not prudent to make confidants of more than a

small number. One might reasonably call in question the discretion or prudence of men concerning whose valor there could be no doubt, and a dozen who knew themselves to be the sole possessors of such momentous knowledge would consider themselves under a more solemn bond of secrecy than they would were they certain that the same knowledge was possessed by hundreds. Owens, who was deeply interested in the tunnel scheme, urged the captain to defer any attempt to capture the guard without explaining his reason, for cautiousness was a marked trait in his character. Calling together his associates engaged in digging the tunnel with whom he had been longer acquainted, he unfolded the designs of Hanchette, and sought their opinion as to the best course to pursue. Collins, a leading spirit in Owens' squad, strongly urged that the tunnel should be completed, that as many men as possible should be passed through it, and assist in the capture of the guard outside, at the same time that Hanchette and his followers should overpower the inside guards. After a careful consideration of this proposition, the tunnel men agreed to acquaint Hanchette with their plan, and sought to have him acquiesce in the proposal made by Collins. As soon as possible after this decision, Hanchette was informed by Owens of the existence of the tunnel and the opinion of his squad in regard to the outbreak. The captain requested an interview with all the members of

Owens' band, hoping to win them over to his project before the completion of their undertaking. The meeting of Hanchette and the associates of Owens took place the night of the 15th of January, a dark and stormy night, in the southwest corner of the prison, the captain sitting upon the ground, Sergeant Owens in front of him, and around these central figures crowded the adherents of the two leaders.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

A CONFERENCE—ORGANIZING THE CONSPIRATORS—  
DIFFICULTIES OF THE SCHEME—THE ASSAULT MADE.

AFTER carefully questioning the men with whom he was personally acquainted as to the trustworthiness of the others in the audience, he spoke in a low tone and laid before them the course he would pursue. He proposed, when the revolt should be made, to have at least two men near each of the nine inside guards, who would at an appointed signal enter into conversation with them, offering articles for sale, or soliciting them to bring from the outside such articles as the guards frequently sold to their captives—tobacco, sweet potatoes, or peanuts. At another signal he would have the two men cast a blanket over the head of the unsuspecting guard, throw him to the ground, wrest from him his gun, and under threat of instant death should he dare to utter a word of alarm, march him to the water-closet, where all would be retained until the prison should be emptied of its inmates. To such guards as might reasonably



be expected to offer the stoutest resistance, three or even more men should be sent. The assault upon the single guards was to be timed to take place just as a new relief of nine men and a corporal should enter the prison. To secure this body, double their number of men were to be placed, apparently sleeping on the ground, near the door of entrance, and carefully numbered to correspond with the numbers of incoming guard, that each two should make no mistake in seizing their appointed victim. This bold stroke when successful would give to the insurgents nineteen guns and cartridge-boxes. Personating the guard relieved, a squad of men could pass outside the brick wall, through the cook-yard, and through the outer gate, before any suspicion of the insurrection should be known to the relief outside. Following the pretended guard should be a score of resolute fellows ready to rush upon the unsuspecting Confederates, of whom a major portion might reasonably be expected to be wrapped in slumber. An outline of the plan to be pursued after this should be accomplished has been given earlier. Owens and his comrades listened patiently to the words of the captain, but deemed it best not to recede from the position they had taken. They begged him again to postpone his outbreak for a few days until the tunnel could be completed, and men passed through it to co-operate

with him from without. Hanchette was impatient and would brook no delay. He declared that his men were fresh and strong and eager, and that postponement only increased the danger of detection. The convictions of each party, due in a great measure to their different experiences, were positive and unyielding. They separated without having come to any agreement, though Hanchette expressed the hope that the tunnel party would not fail to assist in the supreme moment, when their help would be sorely needed. Believing that the outbreak would occur before the tunnel could be completed, work on this was suspended until it was certain what should be the result of the captain's efforts. Hanchette hardly slept; day and night he devoted to organizing a band of liberators, and though Owens and Collins and their party had given no assurance of aid, he spoke freely with them, and announced his determination to strike the blow on the night of the 17th. When the momentous evening came his numbers were yet too few, and reluctantly he postponed it to the following night. The night of the 18th found him but little stronger than before, and he was again compelled to defer the scheme that was consuming his very life. He had, however, on that day won over to his views Sergeant Owens, and the two determined that another night should not pass without an attempt to carry

their plan into effect. The close of January 19th ushered in a night dark and cold and most cheerless. A few during the day had been added to his squad, and at nightfall he designated midnight as the hour for the attack. Midnight, one, two, and three o'clock passed with no assault upon the guards. Here and there moving among the shivering forms cuddled together upon the ground, a careful watcher might have observed Hanchette directing one, imploring another, explaining to a few the cause of delay. For three and four hours a few of his trusted men lay waiting patiently, as they had learned in the years of their hard service. Four o'clock approaches; he dares not delay longer; and begging some to go and awaken the comrades of their acquaintance and inform them of the struggle soon to be attempted, he directed his chosen men to be in readiness near the guards. Near the wide door or gate at the entrance of the inner prison was a bright fire that cast its rays out into the darkness over the prostrate forms of the captives. It was essential that a few should gather about this and obstruct the rays that entered the prison. Going to the spot where Collins was lying down, Sergeant Owens awakened him and whispered, "You must help; the attack will be made in a short time; you must not lie still and let it fail for want of your help. You see the pitch-pine fire just inside

the big door which lights up most of the prison—that fire must be darkened so the guard cannot see the men who are to capture them. You must be one to take care of that; others will be there to assist you. Take along a blanket; shut off all the light that is possible. Be there at four.” With this Owens went away to aid his chief in organizing his men. From a most interesting statement of his experience in Castle Morgan, written by comrade Collins, I quote the part performed by himself. “I walked through the prison and inspected the guards. At the main door there was a corporal and two guards. They did not seem over-vigilant. The fire was built some twenty feet inside the prison of pitch-pine fagots, and every time it would burn low the corporal would replenish it with a fresh supply of fagots. At times a few prisoners who had got too cold to lie longer in their nests would, by permission of the corporal, hover around the fire. This permission was granted to only a few at a time. I made up my mind that the duty assigned to me would not be very difficult to perform, and resolved to do my part as best I could. So I went back to my bunk to await the appointed time, but before it came around the sergeant again called on me and urged me to be ready and make no delay. At about the right time, as near as I could guess, I stole the only blanket that covered six or eight men, and with it



thrown over my shoulders, I approached his highness a corporal of the C. S. A., my teeth chattering, as he supposed from cold, but, as I knew, more from fright; at any rate it served a good purpose at this time. I begged the privilege of warming by the fire. He nodded, as much as to say all right, and I at once accepted the permission thus given and got myself in position at the fire. Two or three others were sitting around the fire, but they soon crawled off to bed, and it was not long thereafter till I was joined by two more gentlemen with blankets over their shoulders. As they came up they gave me a knowing look, with the remark, 'It is awful cold,' and took their places by the fire. We had not long to wait until the guard at post number one cried out, 'Post number one, four o'clock, and all is well.' Number two followed in the same way. They both stood at the door, and then it went on around the prison to the last guard, when it died out in echoes far down the river. In less than five minutes we heard the relief guard coming. The doors of the main entrance consisted of two large ones that filled a space, I should think, ten or twelve feet wide. A small door was cut in one of these, about two by seven, for the guards to pass through at night. This small door was fastened by a bar on the outside, as was also the large ones. As soon as we heard the click of the bar we spread

ourselves over the fire, not like angels of light, but rather like angels of darkness. This was followed around the prison by a stifled, smothered cry of 'Help, murder!' answered by an undertone, 'Silence, or you die.' The door half opened, and as the corporal came in, he heard the cry around the prison and knew it meant trouble. Instantly he jumped back just as eight or ten determined men sprang like tigers from out the darkness at his throat; but he was too quick for them. The door banged shut, the bar clicked as it fell in its place, and we were again walled securely within our 'living tomb.' The attack was made just one moment too soon. The work inside was admirably done. Every guard had been captured with nine stand of arms, and not one of our men hurt. The guards were hurried to the water-closet and were themselves put under guard there, and the attempt was made to organize and batter down the doors; but it was useless, as there was nothing out of which we could make a battering-ram. For this no preparation had been made. It was unlooked-for, unthought-of during all the time preparation had been going on. Outside the Rebels were beating the long roll and officers were calling loudly on their men to fall in. It was impossible to batter down oaken doors with naked fists, and the time already lost was fatal to our plans." Up to one o'clock of

the morning of the insurrection there were probably not two dozen men who were fully informed of the plan of Hanchette and his copartners. Another score of men had learned through these that an "indefinite something," intended to release the prisoners, was in an embryotic state. Until this time, had the injunction of the leaders been faithfully regarded, the feat would have been known to those only who should become fully committed to its prosecution. One member of the band has stated that a solemn oath was required of him at the time of his admission to their companionship. Without questioning the statement, I must express the belief that this was not universal, nor even usual. In the majority of cases the only perquisite was a positive knowledge by some one that the intended new member was a person of unquestionable bravery, intelligence, and discretion, and that no person could be introduced without the consent of the leader, who determined to limit the membership up to the night of the assault to the minimum number necessary to carry out his plan. Several of those who were participants in the capture of the guards were entirely unacquainted with the existence of any plot until only a few hours before it was carried into execution. Neither Hanchette nor his aides fully comprehended the hopelessness of further effort when they failed to secure the relief guard. So many hours and days of intense, absorbing thought and

planning had been devoted to the purpose; seemingly, so carefully had all the minutiae been considered, so fully had the leaders convinced themselves of ultimate success, so easily had the guards within the brick wall been overpowered, they seemed persuaded that only an interruption, and not a defeat, had been encountered. Their convictions and previous success had given their hopes a momentum not arrested by the grave misfortune that prevented their exit from the prison. A majority, however, who had thus far been active participants, as soon as they comprehended the insurmountability of the obstruction, stood as if paralyzed, or withdrew from an enterprise only too evidently doomed to defeat. Not so with Hanchette, Dillon, and others. Seeing their forces melted away, they called again and again upon their fellow-prisoners, the most of whom until a few minutes ago had been sleeping, to join with them in another effort to break out from the prison. Previous to the incoming of the relief guard there had been little more of noise and confusion than ordinarily obtained in that densely crowded prison, that human ant-hill. Even the cries uttered by the struggling sentries as they desperately strove to throw off their assailants caused but little more excitement among those captives not informed of the plot, and awakened but little suspicion in the minds of those guards about the prison who were not disturbed. If



in the assault strange noises had been uttered, the occurrence was too common to arouse curiosity among the prisoners or anxiety in the mind of the sentinels. The senses of the men here crowded together have been obtunded by cold and benumbed by physical wants, and the sentry has long since ceased to wonder at occurrences most strange to him when a novice. About him are thousands of men—men packed more densely than cattle in pens. Strange noises have often been heard issuing from the lips of men delirious with disease, or coming from the throats of men struggling with thugs and assassins; these guards have not been placed about the prison to prevent robbery, to protect the weak and defenceless—their only office is to see that no man escapes from that wretched place and the nightmare that is present through day and darkness. But a new cry awakens the captive, alarms the captor. Failing in the first attempt, their followers retiring from a hopeless cause, the leaders step back from the strong barred gate, and shout, “Fall in, men, fall in!” What magic in the words! Men dreaming of battle and the scenes in their soldier life, where the sharp words portend much, instinctively spring from their inhospitable beds. A confused murmur, growing louder, spreads over the prison, and in a few moments all are awakened. The guards outside this place of confinement and restraint listen to the ominous words, to the subdued tones momentarily

increasing, and in alarm run from their posts of duty. Awakened by the cry, "Fall in, men, fall in!" and the general confusion, I sat up. All over the prison men were rousing and asking of the nearest companion the reason of the subdued excitement. Strange and unexpected scenes were constantly thrust before us, but here was a violent departure from any precedent. Watching for a few moments, and listening to the words and shouts of those most active, it was soon apparent that an attempt at prison delivery had been made, and at the last moment had been defeated. We could hear the excited shouts of the Confederates without, and the "long roll" sounding the alarm added to the dread confusion. (Permit me to refute here, in a brief parenthesis, a malicious slander emanating from an irresponsible source. The statement has been made, in a public meeting, at a national encampment of the G. A. R., that a member of the Eighteenth Michigan, out on parole in the town of Cahaba, beat the "long roll" which aroused the sleeping guard. I have carefully sifted much testimony upon this point, and can say that the author of the statement is a colossal liar, and his words, unsupported by other testimony, are unworthy of consideration.) Up to this point the men who had been most noticeable by their vehement words of exhortation and command were the men who were the lieutenants of Hanchette, the men who were fully informed of, and the leaders in, the insurrection. Now

to the increasing turmoil another class of men added their cries. Awakened from their sleep, wholly unaware of the bold conspiracy that had originated in their midst, hearing the beating drums and the shouts of preparation without, recognizing as a leading spirit of the uprising Owens, the man who had so long worn the clanking chains, a man whose cautious manner and preoccupied mind had impressed many of his fellows with the idea that he was a fanatic, men as brave as Logan, as dashing as Custer, cried out to their fellows, "The leader is an insane man; he is a brave, unreasoning fanatic. 'Tis crazy Owens. Don't try to follow that lunatic. Lie down. The Rebels are ready to kill every man that attempts to pass out." To these men, unconscious of the careful considerations which had been given to the project, this wild uprising was one of the most crazy of senseless schemes. Captain Hanchette again called to his fellow-prisoners. Stepping to the centre of the prison, with a firm, commanding voice he exclaimed, "I want a hundred men, men of courage, to fall in immediately." Only a few responded to the captain's call. He then made a most impassioned and touching appeal, his voice tremulous, not with fear, but with intense emotion. "Comrades! brave men! we can make our escape. There is not a guard upon the stockade, and those inside have been overpowered; will you not make your way out of this hell-hole? You who have never

faltered in the charge, nor your faces blanched with fear when before cannon belching canister, will you not accept your liberty? Fall in, form in two ranks right here; I will lead you." To nearly every man not belonging to his band Captain Hanchette is an entire stranger. He has been an inmate of Castle Morgan but little more than two weeks, his face is unfamiliar. The brave lion heart that is beating in his breast, the soul that never knew fear, the calm daring, the most marked trait of the man, is less known than his face. For this reason his stirring words produced but little effect; few only were influenced by his words and offered to him themselves. Had the form and face been that of William Rea, the wealthy, influential citizen, who a few months before had been our prison magistrate, the man of mature years, of sound judgment, of the most intense loyalty, known and respected by every Union soldier who had entered Castle Morgan previous to his exchange, the burning words would have been followed by an almost unanimous uprising; had the speaker been that loyal Kentuckian, Andrew J. Conn, the broad-chested, eagle-eyed young man who had been our former sheriff, he who had a few weeks before leaped from a flying train and escaped to freedom, a man known to nearly all the inmates, and known to have been one into whose composition fear had never entered, and from whom courage and good sense never de-



parted, had he been the speaker a different result would have followed. But this man addressing the turbulent crowd, prepossessing though he be, is a stranger. Sergeant Owens is regarded by the masses as the leader, and this staunch man as one of his enthusiastic followers. A knowledge by those acquainted with the plot that their plans have been frustrated, the misunderstanding by the crowd of the man, his character and position—both these things robbed his words of all force. Had a hundred men such as Hanchette himself sprung to do his bidding, immediately after the failure to pass through the little prison door, by mutual aid they might have scaled the high brick wall where the roof had been blown away; but now too much time has elapsed. The watchmen without had recovered from their fright, and we hear them being marshalled to repel their unarmed assailants. Again and again the cry is repeated, "Lie down; 'tis one of crazy Owens's freaks." The efforts of the captain are annulled. He recognizes his helplessness, his inability to influence the men he would lead from a worse than Egyptian bondage, and scalding tears of anguish coursed down the cheeks of the strong man in his agony.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

RIGNEY—HIS CONNECTION WITH THE INSURRECTION  
AN ACCIDENT—A CONFEDERATE'S BRAVERY—THREE  
DAYS OF FASTING—SEARCHING FOR THE LEADERS.

IN another part of the prison a ludicrous scene was occurring, a farce side by side with an awful tragedy. Among the persons we found confined at Cahaba, on our arrival there six months before, was a dwarfed specimen of manhood, whose height was that of an ordinary boy of twelve years. On his shoulders, disproportionately broad and square, was placed, with almost no neck intervening, a head such as persons present who in childhood have been afflicted with "rickets." His face was wrinkled and prematurely old. He impressed one as an anachronism, a person born out of his time, a clown, the dwarf court jester of our English kings two centuries ago. His voice was shrill and harsh, and his accents told of Celtic parentage and associations. With many persons an acquaintance of years is necessary to fathom the depths of their nature, but observation of this queer boy-man for a few minutes teaches as much as

an acquaintance of a lifetime. His manner was blustering and bullying to a degree, that, in consideration of his limited physical power, brought an involuntary smile to the face of the onlooker, that would have been a frown had the boy's physique been commensurate with his words. His associates were the thugs and "muggers" and gamblers of the prison, "Perry," Tom Hassett, Pat Ponsonby, and Kelly. By these he is made a pet and protégé, and by these his vaporings are laughed at and cheered. His purse is never empty, he is always able to purchase sweet potatoes and peanuts and bread from the guard, and by the more thoughtful, puritanical soldiers is deemed too intimate with his captors to be worthy of confidence in any scheme to which only men of unquestionable loyalty should be admitted. The name of the boy is Rigney, a member of the Third Kentucky Cavalry. By chance he awakened just as the outbreak was begun. He knew nothing of the intentions of the conspirators up to that moment, but passing near the water-closet, where Mart Becker and Culp had just overpowered a guard, and hearing one of them remark to the disarmed Confederate that he would not be hurt, he seized the Confederate's gun leaning against the brick wall, and lifting it to a "carry," strutted back and forth, a self-constituted watchman over his recent guards. The unexpected situation gave him an opportunity to assume an important rôle, and nature would assert itself,

True, to some one the duty would be assigned, but he would not ordinarily have been the first selection. Back and forth the little hunchback paced his beat, chaffing his prisoners, addressing them as his own captives, as though he was the sole originator of the outbreak. To the Confederates he has always been one of the best known of the Union captives. They speak to him by name and discuss with him the probabilities of the insurrection. In a lofty and authoritative manner, he replies to their remarks, and dismisses subjects of the utmost importance with the air of one who held them in the hollow of his hand. To the men who have accomplished all that has been done his suddenly acquired power awakens at first a feeling of surprise, then of mirth. Meanwhile the Confederate officers have not been idle. Roused suddenly from their slumbers, they hastily dress and form their men in line. Cautiously approaching the prison, they observe no evidence that any of those with whose safe-keeping they had been charged have so far passed outside the place of confinement. Gaining confidence, they carefully ascend to the guard walk at the top of the stockade. Here they learn that the large and small doors are still closed. This fact inspires them with confidence and increases the boldness of the men they command. They double shot with canister two pieces of artillery that have been used to "cover" the prison, and bring them into the prison



yard. Placing these so they will sweep the wide door, if a rush through this is attempted by the insurgents, an officer carefully opens the little door and peers within. He hears the turbulence and noise, but sees no sign of formidable, organized resistance. A facetious youth recognizes the gray coat and brass buttons of an officer, and in a jocular tone calls out, "Come in, Colonel, we won't hurt you." Instinctively the major knows that a majority of the men before him are aware that the insurrection cannot succeed. This fact gives him increased assurance; by this time, too, the mouths of a dozen rifles are peeping through the door. Advancing a few feet out of the range of the guns of his men, he replies vehemently, "You won't hurt me; no, but by ——, I will hurt you." With the sharp point of his sword he thrusts at a group of prisoners close by and wounds several. An acquaintance, now residing in Kansas, then a member of the Fourteenth Iowa, still favors a leg wounded at that time. Many who have been standing near the door, fearing that in the excitement a volley may be discharged into the prison, fall back from the main entrance. Turning to his command, he orders the large door thrown open, and the two cannon brought within. Ere the Confederates had entered the prison-yard, all attempt to form a "forlorn hope," implored by Hanchette, had been abandoned. The entrance of the officer was the death-knell to the possibility of further effort, and

those who had been most prominent in the insurrection, to conceal from this time on their identity as fully as possible, retired into the dense crowd. Rigney, at the first sound of the officer's voice, dropped his gun as though it had suddenly become a hot iron in his hands, and ran headlong into the throng. His importance, acquired so unexpectedly, departed more quickly than it came. In a few moments, under command of Colonel Jones, a force of armed men, fearfully excited, have formed a dense line across the end of the prison next the door. Their guns have been carefully loaded and every bayonet fixed. The two nine-pound Napoleon guns, double-shotted with canister, pushed their muzzles through the ranks. From ground in front of this line which has been used as a bed, until within an hour, by hundreds of men, every Union soldier is driven with horrid oaths and curses; sick and well, strong and weak, are literally jammed into the farther end of the prison, leaving a wide space between captor and captive. The commander of the prison, with every sentence a blasphemous utterance, demands to know the fate of the captured sentinels. Some one cries out, "They are all right." The answer is unsatisfactory. "Give up those men," is the order shouted by the commander. But none of the captured guards appear. "They can't give them back," yelled a Confederate guard, "they have killed them." "Give back the men instantly," is repeated.

The men are still in the water-closet ; so much noise is made that the shout of the officer is not heard at the end of the prison where the guards are still hemmed in. The cowardly Confederate officer gives orders to push the cap into the cannon and take aim. "Ready," he shouts. The man at the lanyard steps outside the cannon's wheels—if he is in the track of the cannon when it is discharged, its recoil will give him serious injury—the lanyard is drawn "taut." The Confederate captives are not brought forward ; there has not been time to get them and force them back through the densely packed crowd, even had any one attempted to do so ; in another moment the order to fire will be given. What an awful slaughter it will cause !—cannon double-shotted at a distance of fifty feet—our men are jammed so closely together that it is hardly possible for some to breathe. The cowardly brute in command of the guards again shouts, "Give up those men in two minutes or I will blow you from hell to breakfast with nine-pound Napoleons." He turns to the men at the lanyards ; he will order "fire" before half of the time he unconsciously named has passed. He is a coward, he was tried and convicted of the basest cowardice shown during the siege of Vicksburg. Cowards are nearly always cruel, and the same strange fate that sent Wirz to Andersonville, Barret to Florence, and Fitzpatrick to Meridian, sent this man to Cahaba. But the reckless bravery of another

officer, a Lieutenant Crutcher, of a Missouri Confederate regiment, saved him from committing the awful crime of murdering men by hundreds. Hardly had the sentence escaped from Colonel Jones' lips, and while he turns to the cannoniers, this brave Confederate officer leaps before the mouth of one of the pieces of artillery and shouts, "Don't fire, you will kill me if you do." The craven cashiered tyrant turns toward the hero, and dares not give the order that will certainly destroy him. And the other, never moving from the muzzle of the cannon, shouts to the prisoners to bring out the men if they be alive. A Union man in the dense crowd tells him the guards are not hurt, that they are coming forward as fast as the throng will admit. The hero remains at his post, and one by one the captive guards come through the struggling mass of humanity, and when all are restored, with oaths and vindictive curses the Rebels pass out of the prison, leaving no guards within the inner wall. All this occurred hours before daylight. As soon as we were left alone, I returned to the place where I had been sleeping, and in a restless manner passed the remaining hours of the night. The first hazy light of the new day had hardly been diffused through the prison yard, when, like a pack of enraged hounds, the guards in strong force entered the prison with fixed bayonets. "Get up, you G—d d—d Yankee s—n of b—hs, get up or I'll jam a bayonet



right through you. You white-livered Blue-Bellies, get out of this," was the salutation all over the prison. A man who had been sick near me the previous day did not obey the order. I shouted to the guard who was near him that he was too sick to move. "Oh, you d—d nigger-loving abolitionist, I'll see whether you can get up," and with a fierce lunge he drove the bayonet through the thigh of the prostrate form. For me to stay was to share the same fate. I hurried on to the southern part of the prison, where all were driven to be counted, and as soon as I was permitted to return I hastened to the invalid who had been unable to rise; he was cold and stiff. Death had taken place hours before, and no more would he be tortured by hunger, cold or wet, and even the pitiless thrust of the bayonet could not bring the frown of pain to please a brutal, cowardly tyrant. The counting was over, and none of the cursed abolition Yankees had escaped. In a short time an officer came into the prison and said the men who had been leaders in the conspiracy must be delivered over for punishment. Whether he supposed his wish would be complied with I do not know, but he walked about the yard for some time, apparently in expectation that his victims would at once be delivered over to him, and seeing no movement in that direction, he swore a wretched oath that not a G—d d—d mouthful of anything could we have till those men were delivered up. Early that

day a detail of Confederates entered the prison seeking Rigney, and soon finding him, guarded him outside the stockade. The fortunes of the little hunchback for a few days were most pitiful. Our rations were drawn each day, and were always so scant that all was consumed within the time. Hours passed on. To those who were in as good health as I was, the gnawings of hunger came and would not be appeased. Some few who were ill and had not consumed their rations entirely, attempted to cook them, but even that privilege was denied them, and in desperation the uncooked meal was mixed with water and swallowed, or deglutition was accomplished after prolonged mastication reduced the coarse meal to a tasteless, pulpy mass. The long, chilly, sunless day was passed by us in suspense and speculation as to what would be done by our captors. The night followed and found men going often to the water-barrels, trying to cheat their unreasoning stomachs and persuade them into quietude. Growls and curses of the "damned Confederacy" were more numerous on the second day than the first. About noon an officer came into the prison and called out into the cook-yard all those who were in charge of companies. With them as the representative of Company D, Second Battalion, I passed out into the cook-yard. All except the specified persons were ordered into the inner yard. To each one of us the question was asked, "Can you tell who the leaders

were in the attempted delivery?" The same answer came from all: "I cannot." We were reasoned with—told that we and every other person in the prison should be kept there without food till we did furnish the desired information. It was of no use to reason with us. All declared ourselves as unconscious of the names of the conspirators as we would have been had we been in "God's country" up to the moment the question was asked. When the officers had passed out, every man said, "They can starve, and starve and repeat, but they cannot find out who were the daring men that so nearly carried into execution the plan for our release." To one of the conspirators, whom I had recognized on the night of the insurrection, I went, when I could do so without exciting suspicion, and told him of the demand that had been made of us. He was anxious—who would not have been at such a time?—but was considerably reassured after learning that there was no one willing to sell him into "punishment," whether that might mean "tying up by thumbs," iron anklets, hanging to the ladder, starvation or death, or, as it afterward proved, a repetition of the "Black Hole of Calcutta" on a small scale. Among the men inside the same question was asked by another Confederate, and a reward was promised to the man or men who should turn traitors to their companions in misfortune; but with violent oaths, many a soldier swore that he would help to "skin and

draw and quarter" any man or lot of men who dared to give the information; and so the day passed on, adding nothing to the fund of information so anxiously sought by our captors. While the "Yankees" held the guards as captives, some who had been especially obnoxious were more or less roughly treated. I was afterward told, that previous to the raid upon the guards it had been fully agreed that no unnecessary rough treatment should be extended to them, and especially was bloodshed to be avoided until the last moment. Some, however, of the men who had been subjected to the abuse of particular guards could not resist the splendid opportunity offered for "getting even" with the tyrants. One fellow was held by two "Yankees" while another blackened his face thoroughly with lamp-black abundantly furnished by the pitch-pine fire, and then to make his toilet complete, his face was rubbed with a little piece of bacon rind. When he came on guard the next day he was about the complexion of a dark-skinned mulatto, and many a sally was made about the "Rebs" putting on negro guards. The fellow winced at being called nigger, but could not help himself, and as soon as possible nearly rubbed the skin from his face in his anxiety to escape the taunts of his captives. Another young braggart who at the time of the raid had begged for his life, and piteously implored the "Yankees" not to kill him, as he claimed to be an unwilling soldier



to the Confederacy, determined to compensate for his cowardice and fear by abundant assertions of his prowess. "Yes, sah, it took a heap of them ar Blue-Bellies to o'power me. You bet your life my bayonet left a pow'ful hole in one of their dogoned carcasses." He was heard to repeat the tale of his prowess by some of our men several times, and rather sneered at others of his comrades who had made a less heroic resistance. The leaders in the affair could not be discovered; bribes were offered to any one who would betray them; threats were made of a punishment worse than starvation if we did not betray them. So far, each method was equally fruitless; then some Confederates suggested that one of the conspirators could be found any way, for one of them had had a taste of Southern steel he would not forget and that he could not hide for a while. The idea was an inspiration. "Yes, we've got you all now," and at once an order came in for us to be thoroughly examined. The programme was short. "Sergeant, have all these Yanks put into the south end of the prison, in the inner yard. Make every one of them undress and tie their clothes up in a bundle; have them take that bundle in both hands, hold it over their heads, and pass between two lines of the guard; each Yank must turn his body around once while passing between the inspectors, and walk through to the outer yard." That was the order, and though it was January, and not a very

hot day either, every man was stripped as directed, and a most thorough inspection was made ; but, alas, the only discovery made was the romancing of the guard, and the glamour with which he had surrounded himself changed into a shirt of Nemesis. His companions whom he had by inference upbraided ridiculed his prowess. His captors called him "the bayonet hero." Two days had now gone by, and no food had passed the lips of any man in the prison. Men who had belts girted themselves tighter, and all went often to the water-barrels. Men feel hunger less if they can drink much.

The third day dawned and brought a new scheme. They would bring in their guards and see if they could not identify some of their captors. All the prisoners are drawn up in line. Each one of the men who had been captured on the eventful night passes along the line and inspects each of its individuals, but we are all black with smoke and grime—all were ragged ; all were haggard and sour from our involuntary fast—certainly all had many points in common. Can the detectives choose aright? A company is passed, and no culprit is named. From another company a man is asked to step aside ; two more are taken from another band ; here and there other men are singled out, and then we are disbanded ; the cross-examination frees some, but not all. A man from my company, a member of the Second Michigan Cavalry,

named Blakely, is declared by one of the guards as one whom he recognizes. The man slept on a piece of ground near me. When I awoke that night so full of incidents, I chanced to look in the direction where Blakely was sleeping. The bright blaze at the gate threw a light about him, and at my first glance he was apparently sleeping; then came the shouts and noise following the capture of the guards, and at once he raised to a sitting posture. I heard him ask what the excitement was about, and when he fully comprehended its extent he remained sitting. He was certainly not with the band of liberators at the moment of their attack on the gate; it was unreasonable to suppose he had been with them before; he would have remained with them till that moment at least, for there had been nothing to cause him to withdraw from them. I go to the officers who propose to take him out of prison; I assure them of all the facts as observed by me; will not my statement release the accused? The guard says it is only a lie to save the d—d Yank. He is led out of the prison, while the search for those most prominent in the uprising still continues.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

ARREST OF MART BECKER—HANCHETTE BETRAYED—HIS  
HEROIC DEMEANOR—REFUSES TO BECOME AN IN-  
FORMER TO SAVE HIS OWN LIFE—HIS DEATH AT  
THE HANDS OF COLONEL JONES.

MART BECKER is being hunted for. He is conscious that he cannot escape being taken out of the prison. He has little hope of escaping recognition. The long hours that have elapsed since the revolt—hours that have brought him no food—hours so full of anxiety that sleep has closed his eyelids but little, have broken his spirit. At home is an infirm mother, loving and loved by her manly son. He is her staff and support. As thoughts of her come to him great tears well up into his eyes, and a sob of deepest emotion bursts from his lips. Said he to a dear friend, when he knew that in a few moments he would be in custody of the guards, "For my own self, I care nothing for my life, I would willingly have given it for the freedom of these men, but for the sake of one at home I would gladly have lived longer." Noble fellow, he only asked to live for one



who had cared for him in his weakness, or to die for those who had with him "touched elbows" in his strength. The searchers approach and take him in custody, and though his eyes be red in love for those at home, he passes out the noblest of God's creatures, a *manly* man. There were many such in that drear place. Captain Hanchette as yet has not been apprehended; he is aware that the searchers have a clue to him, but his friends hope he may escape. Spencer changes clothing with him twice when those who are seeking him have entered the prison. He has grown weak and haggard. The attempt to release the prisoners is called by Colonel Jones, the commander of the prison, a mutiny, and he vows its punishment shall be death. For Hanchette, the days previous to the outbreak have been days of ceaseless bodily and mental activity, since that time they have been filled with the most intense anxiety and foreboding. Like Becker, his thoughts are always of home. There are those whose happiness is dearer to him than life (in an Illinois town he has a wife and babes), dearer than everything else on earth, except honor. The officers are taking out two little New Jersey men. They certainly had no part in the release. I have noticed them for several weeks previous; they look like the boot-blacks and ragpickers along the East River, or like the stowaways on an ocean passenger ship. What can it mean, taking out these two ragamuffins, these Jersey

bounty-jumpers? We had not thought of treachery; our hearts were absorbed in the possible fate of the men who might be destined to punishment. Soon an officer returns and takes out more men, among them Hanchette. The ragpickers have turned informers. From scraps of information, the prison officials are assured that not only is the captain one of the leaders, but was the chief of the leaders. They have gathered, too, enough of his past history to know that he was in Castle Morgan acting the rôle of a citizen, when his true status was concealed. They state to him the facts they have learned, and declare to him that his life is surely forfeited. They assure him that whatever may be the penalty dealt to others, his penalty shall be the greatest. He has no reason to question their intentions. After making to him these assurances, they resort to another scheme. Through spies introduced into the prison and through the two traitors, they have ferreted out much of the plot. They fear there may be more (the unknown, if suspected, is always feared more than the known). They reason that this man knows more of the designs of the Union prisoners than any other one they have placed in custody. They are willing to bribe him to divulge his knowledge. They offer a mitigation of punishment; they tempt him with liberty if he will designate fully all those who were his associates, and the plans for the future, if there be any. Their offers

are offensive to his manhood. They bring before him single individuals believed to have been his assistants; they guarantee him reward and protection if he will but give them assurance that the suspected persons were concerned in the plot. Again and again he refuses to implicate any one. When several had been brought into his presence, and the question asked if these had been guilty of mutiny with him, he responded, "'Tis a waste of time, and to you an irritation, to bring these soldiers before me. I will not recognize any one as an associate with me in the attempt to release the prisoners. Do with me what you will; death on the gallows is better than life purchased with the blood of the noble fellows who have risked so much. I will betray no one." His ringing words are borne back to us in prison, and send the blood tingling through men whose hearts have been chilled by thoughts of the fate that awaits him. Life on the terms offered with it would be unendurable to him, any death that may be inflicted upon him but ennobles him in our eyes. His words are a prophecy. Three months later he is shot down—shot like a wild beast—shot by men behind him, as he staggers weak and faint from the prison cell; but his reticence has saved most of the men who were with him. In all seven men are retained charged with the crime of mutiny, and assured that speedy death shall overtake them. One after another of the

suspected persons are returned to the prison, and we are glad to see Becker with us once more. One of the men who has been outside brings to us the report that even Rigney was made of better stuff than we supposed. He tells us that the Confederates, hoping to wring from the little hunchback by fear some knowledge of the conspiracy (Rigney was the first person arrested), bound him to the mouth of a cannon and threatened with death by its discharge if he did not reveal the names of the conspirators. "Fire away," cried the boy, "but if you kill me General Washburn will shoot a dozen in retaliation." The action of the Confederates was certainly only a stratagem to scare from the boy any information which he could give; but, though he could give no information of the plot, he had certainly seen some of the men who had captured and conducted the guards to the water-closet. Then the little fellow was confined in a box, and for several days subjected to indignities that should not be given public mention. When all had been examined and six retained, Rigney was placed in confinement with the others. That the attempted outbreak should bring consternation to the citizens and military of Cahaba is not to be wondered at. Had the Union prisoners succeeded in their purpose, hundreds of horses, mules, and conveyances would have been seized and carried away; hundreds of cattle would have been killed for food; thousands of dollars' worth of property would have



been wrested from its owners; every house on or near their course to Pensacola would have been plundered for food and clothing, and the torch would have been often used in a spirit of pure mischief or in real or fancied revenge. That rage followed consternation was natural, but the treatment meted out to the unhappy seven captives was more in accord with the spirit of the sixteenth century than that of the nineteenth. One of the seven men retained was "Michigan" Blakely, the man who belonged to the company of which I was commissary. "Michigan" was a sturdy, rough-looking man of thirty or thirty-five when I saw him that day; and when, six weeks after, an old man of seventy was brought into prison and assigned to my company—an old man who went about with his hand placed against his forehead to shade his eyes, an old man stooped with age, his hair a dirty gray, his skin, as it showed through a ragged shirt, covered with blotches and scars—I thought of any one else except "Michigan"—but he it was; his hair, not gray from age, but from nits, his skin bitten by lice. It is sickening to write about it, it is sickening to remember it, it was pitiful and maddening to look at it. From him we learned where his comrades were. Three days without food. The supposed leaders had been taken away. The demands of discipline have been complied with, and at last we are called to get one day's rations. No time is lost by those who act

as commissaries ; no time is lost by those who cook ; the quickest manner of cooking is resorted to ; and I for one eat all I receive as soon as it can be cooked. Had it been three days' rations it would have been the same. But to go back to the men taken away. "Michigan" stated that as soon as they were taken out of the prison all were carefully searched for any concealed weapons of offence or defence, but, of course, there was nothing of any consequence found. Then they were marched to the town calaboose. Inside this, in the centre of the building, was a dungeon about six feet square. It was just large enough to allow four men to lie down at one time while the other three sat quiet. In the same room was a slop-pail intended to receive the fæces and urine of the occupants, and a pail for drinking water. In the dungeon there was no window. In the door was a small opening ten or twelve inches square ; this is safely guarded by a little iron lattice door. Twice each day the little iron door opened and through it entered their meal of corn "pone" and water. No form of meat is allowed them. Out of it goes their fæces and urine. The room is too dark to see each other plainly, too dark to pick off from their clothing the pestful lice ; the air is horrible, loaded with fæcal odors, damp with the moisture of their breaths, sickening from being so often respired, for only another little opening, looking out into the darkness and carefully guarded, permits a slug-

gish change of atmosphere. The lice upon their bodies increase with enormous rapidity, their hair is covered with nits, their scanty clothing is another breeding ground, the dark blue of those who have any remnant of their uniform looks like a mixture of pepper and salt. Little wonder that "Michigan" and his companions came back to us weak and decrepit ; little wonder that they brought to us a sad story of failing health in their companions. Cattle confined in low, dark cellars become tuberculous ; or, confined where exercise is impossible, even if supplied with light and air, their muscles undergo fatty degeneration. Animals of any species compelled for a long time to respire an impure, poison-laden atmosphere, with it saturate every tissue, and every organ is under its influence. In the Mammoth Cave, far from the surface of the earth, where no ray of the sun has ever penetrated, fish are found without eyes ; disuse of these organs through many generations has been followed by their complete atrophy. The law that produces atrophy in the lower order is not broken in the higher. When "Michigan" came back from the dark dungeon his eyes, from weeks of almost disuse, were weakened to such an extent that even the light of the cloudy days was painful to them, and for many days it was only possible for him to grope his way about the prison with his hand to his forehead. With him were released two other men ; four were retained—Hanchette, Ser-

geant Owens, Rigney, and one whose name I cannot recall. When the last lot of prisoners were removed from Cahaba, in the spring of 1865, Owens and Rigney and the third man were taken from their cells and forwarded to Vicksburg with them. Hanchette was refused an exchange or parole. On the arrival of Owens and his companions at Vicksburg the commanding general of that place was informed of the condition of Hanchette and the fact of his retention. At once a demand was made of the Confederate authorities for his release. By comrade Rush, of Larned, Kan., a wealthy, intelligent, and respected gentleman, twice a Senator in the State of Kansas, I have been given the following account of the fate of Captain Hanchette. The facts were detailed to him by the Confederate general through whom, in his official capacity, the exchange of Hanchette was demanded. The minutiae of the case were detailed to comrade Rush by the general while passing a pleasant evening together at the Wilder House, in Louisville, Ky., shortly after the close of the war. In exchange for Captain Hanchette a Confederate general confined at Vicksburg was offered, if the captain were delivered immediately, without trouble or delay. The Union commander was willing to give a general for a captain in order to hasten with all possible speed the release of the man in the dungeon. The proposition was accepted by the Confederate officer, and he wrote



to have the captain forwarded without delay. When the order for the release of Captain Hanchette was received at Cahaba the commander of the prison, Colonel Jones, who both hated and feared his victim, selected two villainous men to act as his guard, and gave them instructions to find some excuse for shooting him while going from Cahaba to Selma. Captain Hanchette was taken forth from the dark dungeon, his strong frame so reduced that he was scarcely able, even under the stimulus of hope, to stand, placed in the custody of the assassins, and started toward Selma. He was shot down in cold blood before he was a mile from town, a fate perfectly in accord with a confinement rarely paralleled in the bounds of any civilized country in the nineteenth century. The history of the Sixteenth Illinois Cavalry, in speaking of Captain Hanchette, incorrectly states that at the time of the insurrection he and his men succeeded in breaking out of the prison, and for two or three days resisted capture, but, finally overpowered, they were carried back to Cahaba, where Captain Hanchette was shot to prevent his falling into the hands of the Union general Wilson. I wish to state that in writing the narrative of the captain's connection with the insurrection, and his fate, the utmost care has been taken to verify every fact and carefully exclude all questionable statements. It may be asked, "What of the two wretches to whose treachery, in part, a portion of this

story of misery should be ascribed?" The miserable creatures (we will not defile the word "man" by applying it to them) were paroled and allowed to go about a small portion of the town; they were given fairly decent clothing, and, for a time, better food than we received. Although they would have been horribly punished—probably killed outright—had they ever again entered the prison, they were seen a few times sneaking about the outside of the stockade by some of our men, but the epithets of hatred, loathing, and scorn that assailed their ears made the proximity of the prison an undesirable place of resort. When we were removed from Cahaba, in the spring, two self-condemned, self-banished forms were seen far up the street, slinking, hiding from the view of the men by whom they were abhorred; and let us hope enough remained of the God-given self-respect that must once have been theirs to make them heed the burning, bitter execrations hurled at them by the departing soldiers.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

AFTER THE INSURRECTION — JONES — BREWER — THE  
FLOOD—INCIDENTS LAUGHABLE, SAD, BARBAROUS.

MEN were often called out of the prison to chop wood, and in several cases one or more of a party would attempt to escape; during the winter, on one occasion, a party was taken on a boat down the river ten or fifteen miles for wood. Among the number were J. W. Jones and George Brewer of the Eighteenth Michigan and a boy belonging to some Illinois regiment. After working all day they were placed in a small barn or shanty, and a guard stationed at the door outside. When all others had fallen asleep the trio arose quietly from their resting-places, lifted a board in the floor, and digging under a sill were soon away from the locality.

All started for the Alabama River, and Brewer and the Illinoisan succeeded in swimming it, but Jones was so poor a swimmer that he nearly drowned, and was only too glad to return to the bank he had just left. Soon after daylight a pack of dogs were placed on the trail of the fugitives. Jones was soon found;

the other boys were traced to the river, a boat was procured, and a few miles over the river Brewer and his comrade were found up a tree, where they had climbed to escape from the dogs. In passing sentence upon the refugees, Jones was placed upon short rations (imagine what short rations meant to men who for months had been compelled to depend upon the adipose stored up previous to capture), while Brewer and his friend wore shackles for several weeks.

Few men entered Castle Morgan after our return from Meridian; but as soon as the cry of "Fresh Fish" was heard (a cry meaning that new prisoners were arriving), downhearted, homesick men would gather about the gate watching for a familiar face, and if none were found, they would stand about the newcomers and ask the old stereotyped questions: "What do you know about the war?" and "What do you hear about exchange?" "Don't you think we will be exchanged soon?" And the hard-muscled, brown-faced boys, who a month before had never given a thought to the possibility of *their* being captured, could only give a vague rumor regarding exchange, but would tell how Hood had been annihilated at Nashville, and "Billy" Sherman had picnicked through Georgia. Then some thin-faced scarecrow, who used to be a soldier of Thomas or Sherman, would throw his old rag of a hat in the air and shout, "Three cheers for 'Old Pop' Thomas," or "Bully for 'Old Billy,'" and for a



few hours the gloom that had surrounded them like a pall would be driven away.

Only men who have been thoroughly and desperately homesick, entirely discouraged, always hungry, at night always cold, can have a clear conception of our mental condition during the long, dreary months that for us marked the fall, winter, and spring of 1864 and 1865.

After the insurrection, increased vigilance on the part of the guards was imperative, and to a prison already the most secure in the Confederacy new strength was added.

Little change from the routine of previous months occurred during the remainder of January, nor until very near the latter portion of February. Then, as if the commander of the prison, Jones, had cast about for other means of making our place of confinement more intolerable, and by virtue of a previous contract with the Prince of Evil had secured the aid of a malignant demon, a demon having power over storms and floods, for days we were shut out from the light and warmth of the sun and were surrounded by the clouds and fogs and rains of Labrador.

The long-continued rain raised the waters of the Alabama until its banks were full; the snow on the hills and small mountains at the source of the river was melted by the spring sun, and added its own volume to the seething mass of waters that came rush-

ing down upon us. In the early afternoon of the first day of March, the water of the river, distant at all times only a few feet, entered the prison and covered the lower portion of the ground. After that it quickly covered the whole surface of the prison, the portion where I was sleeping being overflowed before ordinary bed-time, and by midnight there was no dry spot to be found at any point.

All night the men stood up in the cold water, a few being able to climb upon the roosts; but the roosts were built only to bear the weight of a small number, and those who were their occupants strenuously objected to their being sought as a refuge from the involuntary chilling foot and knee-bath that was thrust upon us.

Nor was it safe for a large number to crowd upon a roost. In one case a large number crowded upon one of the roosts, and their weight crushed it to the earth, or, rather, water. A man who was in one of the lower tiers was caught by the falling timbers and his back nearly broken.

Men shivering with cold, with teeth chattering as in an ague, preferred to wade about in the chilling water rather than chance climbing upon a rickety roost and have it fall and crush them for their pains; they preferred the evils they already had rather than fly to those they knew not of.

As soon as the following morning (Monday, March

2d, 1865) came, with several sergeants I went into the outer yard to see some one of the officers of the guard, hoping that we might be allowed the privilege of an interview with the commander of the prison, Colonel Jones.

We had been there but a short time when a boat rowed up to the stairs leading to the walk about the top of the stockade; in the boat, as good luck would have it, was the very person we sought—Colonel Jones. As soon as he had mounted to the walk, I saluted him, and asked that we might be marched out to some dry ground several feet higher than the prison, a short distance away. He replied that it would give us too good an opportunity to get away. The possibility of an escape at that time was an absurdity. The whole country was flooded. The whole prison was without shoes to their feet or covering to their backs. If they had been turned loose with permission to walk unmolested to their own armies, there were not twenty men in the whole three thousand who possessed enough endurance to have accomplished the feat. The majority of them had been broken down so thoroughly with cold, and hunger, and wet, in sleeping on muddy ground, and enduring the diarrhoea and dysentery chargeable to months of feeding upon coarse corn-meal, that they hardly had power to drag themselves about, much less escape through a country they knew nothing of, only that it was half-covered

with an icy water that chilled soul as well as body.

We urged upon him that human endurance had its limit, and that in our case that limit had been nearly reached ; that our food was only corn-meal, which we must cook before it could be eaten ; that we could not build fires upon the surface of a river ; that our men were chilled already to the very marrow. He listened, we thought, with some attention ; our misfortunes, we hoped, had appealed to a tender part in his soul, and when we had ceased to speak, we flattered ourselves that our appeal would be followed by an order from him for us to be marched out to the dry ground, where there was an abundance of underbrush for fuel. We were mistaken ; he had listened, it is true, with interest to the tale of sorrow doubly told to him—told to him by his own eyes, told to him by our pleading tongues—he had listened not only with interest, but with pleasure, for he surely delighted in our miserable condition ; while he hesitated to answer, as a final argument that we would not escape, I said to him : “ I guarantee that every man in this stockade will not only not attempt to get away, but you can surround us with a double chain of guards, and, in addition, we will give our parole of honor, punishable by death if broken, that we will not attempt to escape.”

He replied then—I can feel the hate through this score of years. My blood boiled then with resent-



ment; it brings a flush to the cheek even now—"Not so long as there is a G—d d—d Yankee's head above water can you come out of that stockade." He turned slowly and descended the stairs.

It would be difficult for me to believe such a story as I have narrated, were it told me by any one, had I not been for three-quarters of a year a prisoner in rebel prisons. I could not help saying to the narrator, "There must have been some mistake, some misunderstanding, that would in part excuse the crime, some misconception that would in part account for and lessen the heinousness of the deed." But I aver here, and every person living in Cahaba at that time knows, that the prison was flooded with the overflow of the river, and that we were not removed from it at the time; and if they are alive to-day, there are two hundred witnesses to our conversation, who will verify every word I have written. Alas! of the two hundred who were about me, many are now, and were soon after, buried from the hospitals of Vicksburg, Jefferson Barracks, and the other locations to which they were sent as soon as they entered the lines of the Union army.

At about the same time that I was captured, of fifteen men, acquaintances, who became captives, three alone saw the end of the war.

There was nothing now for us but "to stand and take it"—any one can do that when they can do no

better. Our ration on Monday was, as usual, meal, and, I expect, a taste of bacon. We had no wood in the prison, and, if we had, the art of building a fire on the surface of a lake had not then been perfected ; our meal, therefore, was eaten raw, and washed down by the thirst-slaking water so bountifully supplied to us ; a little more cursing of the Confederacy than usual was heard throughout the stockade ; men who were willing to speak with moderation a few days before of those who would go into the army of the enemy, were not as temperate in their views at this time, and had a Confederate recruiting sergeant come among us then seeking names for his muster-roll, with a good deal more than the usual sharpness he would have been requested to go to the place "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," and would have been informed that all his friends would ultimately "settle down" there with him.

It was strange how every added injury and cruelty and hardship made men more devotedly attached to our Government and more devoted haters of the Confederacy.

Either Monday evening or Tuesday morning a ration of crackers was sent into the prison.

All night long men could be heard paddling and wading about in the chilly water ; occasionally a mis-step would be made, a hole would be stepped into, and the "sousing" would be announced with a yell.

In all the wretchedness and misery by which we were surrounded laughable episodes occurred, of which the following example is one of many :

Extending from one side of the prison to the other, resting upon the tops of the side brick walls, were large square timbers used to support the roof and to prevent the spreading of the walls. Upon their upper sides they presented a smooth, flat surface broad enough for a man to lie extended upon with ease. To one of these timbers a tall, broad-chested Tennessean climbed ; for a day and two nights he had waded about in the cold water, not daring to climb upon a roost ; weary from his long period of wakefulness, he extended himself at full length upon the broad timber and in a few moments was fast asleep. For an hour or two he was motionless, then comfort required a change in his position ; half-asleep, not remembering his novel location, he threw himself impatiently upon his side, and shot downward into the watery bed below. A cry of astonishment burst from his lips as he smote the water, and a look of terror came to the faces of a few comrades whom he narrowly missed in his fall, as they looked up in surprise and fear lest a whole platoon might rush upon them from an unknown place above. Scrambling to his feet he spat the dirty water from his mouth and was heard to remark morosely that he would " not go to sleep in that place again." Into the inner prison a Confederate

officer rode mounted upon his horse. He was curious to see the men in all parts of the prison, and using his spurs freely urged his timid animal to the south side of the enclosure. Directly before him, concealed by the impure waters, were the sunken water-barrels from which heretofore we had obtained that fluid. Some one shouted to him that he would get wet if he rode about the enclosure. The warning was interpreted as a threat, and in petulance he pricked his horse sharply with his spurs. A moment later horse and rider were down, floundering in the deep water-course.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

STILL IN THE WATER—DRINKING FLUID POLLUTION—  
EATING RAW MEAL—NEARLY ALL SICK—IS IT A  
PAROLE?—LEAVING THE WORST PRISON OF THE  
CONFEDERACY.

TUESDAY brought us no cheer. How long can human beings endure this? We eat our scanty food, and, feeling that prayers and curses are equally unavailing, look on almost disinterested spectators. One young fellow who had left college to enter the army as a private three years before, and had, in his studies, been much impressed by the doctrines shortly after enunciated by Dr. Darwin, suggested to me that the law of atavism (transmission of ancestral peculiarities) was our only hope. Said he: "We have all ascended from the lower order of beings, and the man who has inherited most from an amphibious ancestor has the best show in the skirmish."

In the middle of the afternoon (Tuesday) some one came into the stockade and called out to us that we could go outside and get wood—all we wanted—that plenty of it was piled up near the prison gate. For a

moment we could hardly understand what good "plenty of wood" could do us ; then some one, the messenger doubtless, suggested that we could build up little "cob-houses," until they should be above the water, upon which we could place a platform of wood.

The idea was seized in a moment, and all rushed to the gate and were permitted to go out at once ; big armfuls were laid upon the water and floated in ; in a short time the inner prison was covered with little wood platforms, and the night found us "high and dry."

By this time a new and most sickening feature was added to our cup of sorrow, full already it seemed to overflowing. The food of raw meal and little pieces of raw meat produced their legitimate result, a universal diarrhoea and dysentery ; it must be remembered that the stockade was built of logs standing closely side by side, and while they permitted the water to leak in between the cracks, once in it became almost stationary so long as the water was equally high without the stockade.

This condition held true to a greater extent in the inner prison than in the outer—indeed, as the walls were brick on all sides, there were but two places where water could have an entrance and exit, by the gate, perhaps twenty feet wide, and through the closely placed boards that formed the wall of the privy ; water, therefore, that once was in the brick enclosure

remained practically stationary, and anything floating on its surface never passed out.

Remember that within an enclosure 190 feet long and 111 feet wide—21,000 surface feet—were crowded over 3000 men, giving to each man a space only  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet wide by  $2\frac{4}{5}$  feet long.

Before Wednesday, every man of my acquaintance was suffering from diarrhœa, having from two to a dozen movements in a day, all of which, floated upon the surface of the water or diffused through its substance, was retained in the prison; this water, more nearly related to the contents of a city's sewer than the pearly drops that fall from heaven to slake the thirst of fevered lips, was mixed with our meal for bread, was used to cool the aching brow, and, when some poor fellow whined out, "Please give me a drink of water," was dipped from its filthy pool to moisten a pasty mouth.

Don't think this a falsehood; to readers of to-day it seems impossible, but it not only was not impossible but was a sickening reality.

When the water had become, on the first day or two, nearly knee-deep over the greater portion of the prison, it ceased to rise more and remained for several days stationary; but until it had fallen so that men went to the water-closet, and fæces there deposited could pass out, the condition of the water became daily more and more filthy.

This ordeal was the one through which the hitherto robust physique of the writer could not pass unscathed. All through the weeks and months of the summer and fall the author had retained a voracious appetite and seemingly undiminished powers of endurance; indeed, the unsatisfied hunger was a great torment, filling the days with restlessness and the nights with tantalizing dreams of food; but that was better than the condition of system that made food loathsome, and when the flood entered the prison, I was, though poor in flesh and suffering slightly from scurvy, in fair health.

The raw meal was like a dose of strong cathartic. Had we known that in a day there would be issued to us crackers, common-sense would have said, "Wait, even if you are consumed with hunger." But we did not know, and nothing in the past had led us to suppose we would be tenderly cared for. The man who had said, "Not a Yankee can come out of that prison so long as their heads are above water," would not be expected to render us any deeds of kindness, nor permit them if in his power to prevent.

The severe diarrhoea and dysentery soon reduced me to apathy, weakness, and fever. A few days later the threatening scurvy was more pronounced, and ultimately ruined the excellent apparatus for mastication which nature had provided, and which, till captivity came, had been almost perfect.



As the days passed on, the men suffering from bowel affections showed plainly their depressing effects.

At first they only swore a little more than usual about the "d—d corn-meal" as they went often to the water-closet; then we noticed in a day or two that they were less prompt in claiming their usual rations of the article; their faces looked more sunken, their eyes more hollow, their steps more languid; but we heard of none who were taken outside to the hospital; they sat about during the whole day listless, spiritless. When they confined themselves to only a small amount of crackers or pounded it fine and browned it in our iron kettles, the disease was moderated, but never absent. Many resorted to this simple remedy, as it was the only medicine that we knew of being used, and the days dragged on as before, except that daily a much larger number were dragging themselves listlessly about with hollow eyes and parching throats.

On the morning of the 2d, Confederate officers came into the prison in a small boat and paddled about in it to make their daily inspection. Our rations were issued to us from boats, a space being left between the little cob-house piles of wood for the boats to pass from one portion of the prison to another. A comrade has written of this time in the following words: "We could almost flatter ourselves that we were inhabitants of the city of Venice. When we looked

at the piles of cord-wood on which we were perched we could easily imagine them to be the 'Bridge of Sighs;' and we only had to close our eyes, then we were sure we were in some dungeon undergoing the worst tortures of the Inquisition, and that the rebel skiffs with their guards were the swift-gliding gondolas moving along in search of their victims. Yes, we had become Venetians, and our music rang out over the still waters, not in the gentle tones of the guitar, accompanied by the sweet cadences of gay revellers, but in the hoarse and broken voices of three thousand suffering, shivering, starving creatures, with curses on their lips and bitterness in their hearts, consigning Colonel Jones and the whole Confederacy to the infernal regions of the damned.

"On a pile of cord-wood not more than four feet by six could be seen from four to six persons living by day and sleeping by night, with no other exercise but that afforded by lying down and getting up, compelled to occupy these roosts no matter how badly the cord-wood bed bruised the flesh. The conditions of the prison had been bad enough before—in fact, we had imagined that under no circumstances could they be worse, but when the flood came we felt that, as compared with our present condition, we had been living in paradise before. We were as so many shipwrecked mariners floating about on the pathless ocean, with only a limited supply of cord-wood for life-preservers,

completely at the mercy of the waves. How we wished that we could once more be landed on *terra firma*, and have the dirt and sand for a bed, or even a piece of dry ground to stand on. The water continued at about the same stage until the fifth day, when it began to fall; but it was not until the seventh that it all ran out, and we could descend into mud and mire. All over the prison a sediment had been deposited some three or four inches deep, and the ground had become so completely water-soaked that it was not until about the tenth that it had become sufficiently drained to enable us to clean off the sediment and get down to dry ground. Every man who was able went to work and helped to clean up both inside the prison and the stockade, and by the evening of the tenth everything was clean and in nice condition, and the last vestige of the flood had been removed. This ended the great flood of Castle Morgan, which had continued from the morning of the 1st of March until the normal conditions had been restored on the 10th. A happier set of men, considering their surroundings, were never seen than the inmates of Castle Morgan when they got back to their regular quarters." (Ira F. Collins.)

At this time active preparations were being made by the Union general, James H. Wilson, to make a raid upon Selma; a knowledge of his probable intention was possessed by the Confederates, and they were

extremely anxious to dispose of the prisoners confined at Selma and Cahaba. The operations of the Union troops east of Alabama promised less of security there than where they already were. If moved westward toward the Mississippi their recapture was equally probable. Their only hope of preventing our recapture was to parole us in a body and send us to Vicksburg. Of their desperate condition, however, we were almost wholly ignorant.

Before the water had left the prison a few hundred men were called out and removed from Cahaba on a river steamer, and shortly—perhaps a day or two—after the water had receded from the place, the major portion of those remaining were informed that we would be paroled and sent to our own lines. No one believed the assertion. We placed no reliance on any statement made to us by our captors. If we should be removed, we believed it would be only to some other prison. At length we were marched out of the hated place and drawn up in line before the office of the prison commander.

Colonel Jones then addressed us substantially in these words :

“Men, you are about to be sent through to your lines, where I believe we will be able to make arrangements with the Commissioner of Exchange representing the Government at Washington for your exchange; but before we can move you close



to your lines, and to protect the Confederate Government in case you are not exchanged, you will now be required to take an oath not to take up arms against the Confederate States of America until you are lawfully exchanged, and that until you are turned over by the Confederate officers to the proper officers of your Government you will not attempt to escape from the officers and guards having you in charge. Are you willing to take this parole?" Every man in the line shouted "I am," whereupon a Confederate officer mounted a box and called for hands up, when he delivered the parole. When it was concluded, he informed us that the oath would be attached at the head of the roll of prisoners present that day, and would be retained by the officers in command of the guards that would accompany us. This performance over, the command "Right face" was given, and we were marched down to the landing and put on board an old steamboat, which soon after pushed out and started up stream, to the great delight of all the prisoners on board.

Concerning our departure from Cahaba and the position which Castle Morgan must occupy in any truthful history of Confederate prisons, we quote again from Senator Collins:

"About a mile above Cahaba, where the river makes a bend to the east, we caught the last sight of the grim walls of Castle Morgan, and in a few

moments it was shut out from view by the river bank, and as it disappeared a prayer of thankfulness went up from every loyal heart on board of that rickety old steamboat, and all expressed the fervent hope that we might never see its accursed walls again ; that our feet might never again be compelled to press the ground on the spot where for the last ten months there had been greater misery and suffering than at any other on the whole face of the earth. This statement may be doubted, and even denied by some, but *when the facts are known Cahaba must go down in history as worse in a great many respects than Andersonville or any other military prison of the Confederacy.* In the first place, it was five times more crowded than Andersonville. There was no greater supply of rations, and they were of no better quality, with no provisions made for cooking except a scanty supply of green gum and pitch-pine, while at Andersonville the meal was baked into bread outside the prison, and thus cooked was issued to the prisoners ; but at Cahaba nine-tenths of all the meal issued to the prisoners was either made into mush or eaten raw, on account of the scarcity of fuel to cook with. Just after the attempted outbreak we were compelled to fast nearly three whole days without drawing a single ration. Andersonville prisoners never suffered this, and during the flood our treatment was the crowning infamy of all. It is true the misery

and suffering at Andersonville was awful beyond description, and the tales of woe as related by its surviving inmates seem almost incredible, yet Cahaba was even worse, if human suffering from infamous and inhuman treatment could be worse."

Writing this chapter in the history of the great Civil War, with the most scrupulous care to state only facts, we are conscious that its statements may be criticised and even denied by some as being unreasonable and an allegation of sufferings that would be beyond the limit of human endurance; with such a possibility in view, we are glad to add to our own the testimony of another eye-witness of unimpeachable character.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LEAVE YOUR BLANKETS—AT SELMA—FIVE DOLLARS  
FOR AN EGG—JACKSON, MISS.—CROSSING BLACK  
RIVER—UNDER THE STARS AND STRIPES—FARE-  
WELL TO COMRADES.

**I**T is not probable that one-tenth of our number really believed we were to be sent to our lines, nor would they have believed it had every Confederate officer with us made a solemn affidavit to that effect. So many times, when moving from one place of confinement to another, was the same statement made and falsified, that we had learned to expect such a rumor and to distrust its truth.

Every man on going out was ordered to leave all blankets and quilts not marked with the "U. S." I heard no explanation of this rule.

This was a sad loss to those men who, shivering with sickness, needed a covering when stretched upon a cold, damp ground. It was more than ten days before they entered Union lines, and many of these days were cold and rainy and passed by the returning captives outside of all shelter.



The phrase "on parole" seemed rather pleasant to our ears; it bore with it a feeling of liberty that was comforting. True, no one believed that it meant anything, but what pauper does not feel himself more of a man with the gold of another even for a short time in his keeping? The delusion that it is his own, even though he knows that it is a delusion, is comforting.

We went on board the boat, and late in the afternoon arrived at Selma. The day was cloudy, and shortly after we arrived the rain began to fall.

Somewhere we gathered up chips and sticks of wood and built a small fire, and as darkness drew on a few of us who had been comrades scraped the mud from the surface of the ground and lay down with our feet to the fire and like spoons in a bunch. The back of a friend a "blanket" in front, the breast of a friend a "blanket" behind, we passed the night, chilly and damp and feverish.

The morning before leaving Cahaba I made a thin gruel from a tablespoonful of meal and a pint of water. It tasted well, but half of the amount was an abundance. The morning of the 14th we marched over to the depot, and while there I made my last sale of personal property to a peddler of cold-boiled eggs and biscuits.

When I was captured I had a good silk handkerchief which I often wore about my neck. I had less

fear of its being taken from me when thus worn than when carried unoccupied in a pocket. This handkerchief had been my "towel" all these long months, often was my haversack in which to receive rations, had done duty in binding up the sore foot and ankle of a friend, and was ready at all times to perform any miscellaneous service to which it might be called.

I loathed the thought of corn meal or anything that could be made from it; the sight of the eggs awakened the thought that they might be palatable. I inquired the price of the eggs. "Five dollars apiece, or fifty dollars a dozen." I had become used to their estimate of Confederate money, and was not surprised at the answer.

"How much are your biscuits worth?"

"Two dollars and a half each."

Now, here was an opportunity to transact quite a heavy business.

Then in a coy manner I brought forth my stock-in-trade, the handkerchief.

I held it by its poorest corner, and flaunted its best part to the breeze. I endeavored to show but little anxiety to dispose of it, but knew that silk handkerchiefs were not the most common articles in the Confederacy, and ingeniously tried to direct his thought into the same channel.

My efforts were a partial success, for he soon offered me for it the munificent sum of ten dollars;

now, ten dollars, as usually understood, for a veteran handkerchief should make one's head swim, but I assumed an indifferent air, taking enough interest in its sale, however, to place my figures at fifteen dollars. Some one has said that "all things are possible to the man who waits," and I waited for him to come to terms; after considerable sparring he raised his price to twelve dollars, and I came down to thirteen, and we closed the transaction at two cold hard-boiled eggs and one fair-sized cold biscuit, said to be composed of wheat flour and a little meal, but found to be composed chiefly of corn meal, with a small part of its contents flour.

I ate one of the eggs, hoping it would be delicious, and it did taste different from anything I had eaten for nearly a year, but when it was finished I wouldn't have eaten the other for a suit of clothes, bad as I needed them. The appetite of an invalid is capricious.

In the forenoon we got away for Demopolis, and after a six hours' ride found ourselves at that town, distant from Selma about forty miles. Six miles and a half an hour was pretty good time over that road.

On the road the rumor spread among us that we were destined for some point in Texas.

An indifference and despair had settled over us. We felt that we couldn't do much worse than we had been doing for the past two weeks, but we hoped

that if they tried to take us over the Mississippi in small boats, some providential gun-boat would come along just at the right time and recapture us.

Many of us could not hope for much more than that. For one, I was suffering from a continual fever, a constant headache, the bowel affection continued unabated, and having been in the same condition many days, and eating scarcely anything for a fortnight, I could scarcely travel. Any assistance that might come to us must not expect us to meet it half way.

When we arrived at Demopolis we were put in an old shed. I cared nothing for any supper, so laid down on the ground and in due time was joined by my other companions, who "spooned" through the night, as usual.

I neglected to mention that during the last day or two that I was in Cahaba some one died who had quite a good woollen shirt. This I boiled and washed, and wore from that time until we were given clothing by the Government at Vicksburg.

The morning of the 15th we left Demopolis on a steamer going to McDowell's Landing, distant down the river perhaps ten miles. There we left the boat and boarded a freight train for Meridian, and some time in the night arrived there.

I was too sick to notice much that was about me after leaving Demopolis, and from that time until we



arrived in Vicksburg have but a dreamy remembrance of events.

As an evidence of the wretched state into which the railroads of the Confederacy had degenerated in a year, it may be mentioned that while we occupied from early morning till late in the afternoon in going from Meridian to Selma, a distance of less than one hundred and fifty miles, in July, 1864, the same distance in March, 1865, occupied more than twenty-four hours of constant running.

Our party arrived in Meridian very late at night, perhaps past midnight, and I think we left some time next day. Arrived at Jackson by rail in another day or two, the train moving so slowly at times that men could get off from the train and walk as fast as it moved. One of the reasons that hastened the collapse of the Confederacy was the wretched condition into which its railroads had fallen. The road-bed was so uneven at places and the ground so boggy that in many locations the speed of the train was not more than two miles an hour, and a greater speed would have sent the cars toppling from the rails.

We stopped at Jackson several days, our party being camped on a piece of ground west of the city.

In the forenoon of the 21st rations were dealt out to us alleged to be sufficient for two days, and we were directed to be ready to move forward by one P. M.

An unnatural depraved appetite for a time took possession of me, and I set about to cook what had been dealt out.

The rations for two days were a small piece of bacon the size of a man's thumb and a half pint of a mixture of flour and meal, with no salt or any other form of food. I mixed up the meal with water only, in a pint fruit can in the possession of one of our party, and borrowing a half of a canteen from another, greased the canteen with the bacon, and fried two pancakes. The bacon was just enough to comfortably grease the "frying pan" twice, and when it had done its duty thus far, there was nothing left of it to eat.

The two days' rations, represented by two pancakes, were eaten at once, and at the appointed hour we fell into line, and all started westward.

In our party were a large number of men who had served with General Grant in the rear of Vicksburg in the summer of 1863. Many had been in Jackson after the fall of Vicksburg, and when we started out from Jackson and took the most direct route to Vicksburg, they recognized the course at once, and conveyed to us the joyful tidings that we certainly must be on the eve of an exchange. The guards had told us so all the time, but men who had been told the same thing many times before placed no reliance on their words.

Late in the afternoon a gentle rain began to fall,

and continued at intervals during the night and the following day. During the night we built fires from the underbrush, and in some manner obtained a broken, unsatisfactory sleep.

Early the following morning we were on the road ; many of the men, like myself, had eaten their whole amount of food drawn at Jackson at one meal, so there was no time lost in cooking breakfast. During the day we passed over the battle-ground of Champion's Hills, and late in the afternoon came to the valley of the Black River. This valley was completely overflowed with water, varying in depth from a few inches to a foot. For a distance of two or three miles we waded through this water, and just as the sun was setting behind the hills we came in sight of the river across which was the beautiful—yes, dear old flag, the Stars and Stripes, a line of nice white tents, and good, clean, strong, soldierly-looking men.

My heart came up into my throat, and tears of deepest emotion gathered in my eyes. I could have cried heartily at the sight if I had only been alone, but surrounded as we were by our comrades, each man checked back the tears and pressed on to the bank of the river, which, from a little higher than the ground over which he had just travelled, was above water and comparatively dry.

With clothing so scant, with the rain during the day, and with the final wading through the long

stretch of cold water, I was more feverish than common, and seated myself on a piece of driftwood, watching with a sick man's interest the efforts of others in their attempts to procure a fire.

At last it is accomplished—a big bright fire burns a hole into the darkness, and standing before it, I roasted one side and chilled the other until nearly three in the morning, when, having dried my clothes—my shirt and pants—I begged the privilege of a man I had never before seen—a man from some other prison, of crawling under his blanket, and after a time was lost in sleep.

In a few hours the sun rose, and as it became warmer sleep was less broken, and I dreaming of being back once more in Castle Morgan—a troubled, anxious sleep, when a friend came to me and awoke me with the statement that my name had been called three times with no response.

I hastened immediately to the point designated by my friend, and there found one of our own Union men calling the names of those who were to be received on parole, and as each man answered to his name, he started over a long pontoon bridge that extended across the river at this point.

At the near end was a Confederate, at the farther end was a Union soldier. So persistently had we been deceived by the Confederate guards whenever we were moved from one prison to another, that I



doubt if there was a man in all our hundreds who felt certain of his liberty until he was past the last Confederate and close to a rifle borne by a Northern soldier. With sluggish steps and aching, dizzy brain, I passed the last Confederate, the last emblem of a captivity which surrounding horrors and soul-sickening scenes had caused to seem an age, and approached a lieutenant, who looked with pity and commiseration upon our rags and squalor and weakness.

Upon the western side of Black River was a small hill. As I passed the Federal officer an ex-captive said to him, "If that hill were solid gold and you could give it to me to return to the horrors of a month ago, with all its uncertainties, even for a week, I would not consider it for a moment." He only expressed the feeling of every man I knew.

A most dramatic occurrence took place during that morning, to a full understanding of which it will be necessary to go back to the previous year. The color-bearer of a Wisconsin regiment—the Twelfth or Thirteenth—was Mart Becker.

In an engagement of the fall of 1864 Mart Becker was captured with others of his regiment, and to save his colors he tore them from their staff and wrapped them about his body. All through the long months of captivity he carefully secreted them about his person or in his humble bed. When the attack was made upon the guards at Cahaba in January, 1865,

Becker, who was one of the liberators, was wounded in the hand, and escaped detection because the guards were ordered to carefully inspect the bodies of the prisoners, and no attention was paid to hands. While being examined, along with all others, the flag was rolled tightly up and hidden in a boot, and as long as possible watched over by his comrade, George Culp, of the Fourteenth Iowa. Culp was one of the last to be examined for the reputed bayonet wound, and one of the first persons to return to his bed after the examination was Becker.

The flag was carefully secreted, and the knowledge of its being in the possession of a prisoner was confided to but a very select few.

The brave Wisconsin boy who had guarded his flag with so much devotion waited with impatience for his name to be called, that he might pass over the bridge that connected the Union and Confederate lines. He had prepared an impromptu substitute for a staff, and when a little more than half way across the bridge he drew the flag forth from beneath his ragged garments and fastened it to the staff. Oh, what shouts went up from the prisoners as they saw it! Strong men shouted and men too weak and sick to care for any common occurrence cried with emotion. Pandemonium was there for many minutes.

Becker, I learn, lived to go to Colorado, and died, it is believed, in Leadville.

It was past mid-day before all names had been called and the formal transfer of the prisoners had been accomplished. Then all were placed upon cars that had been sent out from Vicksburg, and in an hour we were at the "Four-Mile Bridge," east of Vicksburg, where it was designed for us to go into a temporary camp.

By some misunderstanding, preparations for the comfort of the prisoners were entirely inadequate for the large number of which our body consisted. There, however, was no lack of food for those who were able to eat it. To a large number of us, however, the question of food was of minor importance; to men burning with fever at one moment and chilling the next, whose mouths were bitter and pasty, whose bodies were emaciated by long months of scanty diet and long weeks of disease, the most palatable food might be loathsome.

Many, like myself, had eaten nothing since leaving Jackson, two days before, and only cared to barely taste what might be obtained at the quarters of the commissary. What should have been prepared for the reception of our multitude were long lines of comfortable hospital tents, dozens of good nurses, and a body of cooks who knew how to prepare such food as sick men could eat. But, as mentioned before, only the most meagre provision was made. We were told that no one knew of our expected arrival until a very

short time before we came, and no intimation was given that our numbers would exceed a few dozen.

We arrived at "Four-Mile Bridge," four miles east of Vicksburg, in the mid-afternoon. Obtaining from the commissary what could be obtained, I and a few other sick companions made a gruel of some crackers and beef, and then began looking for accommodations for sleeping. To obtain a tent or boards to make a shelter was entirely out of the question, and when night came on we were still without a comfortable place to sleep.

As darkness began to approach we collected as much wood as our feeble condition would allow, and lay down upon the ground near a fire, roasting one side of the body and freezing the other. As many of our number was suffering severely from diarrhoea, some one was up at all hours of the night, and our fire was replenished as often as necessary.

Near the place where we camped was a cane-brake swamp, thickly studded with tall, stout canes. On the following day, borrowing a hatchet from the tent of an officer, our "mess" cut a great many of the canes, and from them we built a little shed-like shelter, large enough for our number to sleep under, where we would be sheltered from any breeze and the dampness deposited as dew each night. Two layers laid cross-ways formed our bed, and with such accommodations we passed our second day and night.



But to a person sick enough to be constantly confined to a comfortable bed and constantly attended by a tender, watchful nurse, that little rude, cramped shed of canes, with its hard bed of canes, with no blankets or other bedding, was a most cheerless place, and uncomfortable to an uncommon degree. So, after one night in the little place I and a comrade looked about for more comfortable quarters, and found an empty barn a quarter of a mile away, in which were a few armfuls of hay and straw; next we sought blankets. Going to the tent of the quartermaster, we asked him to loan us one from a large pile in his store tent. He was kind, courteous, and anxious, apparently, to oblige us, but by some error no blanks or stationery had been sent to him. He had only arrived that day, and he in a sympathetic way told us that if he should allow the blankets to be issued without proper receipts he would be obliged to pay for them himself, and he could hardly afford to lose three to five thousand dollars. "There should, certainly should, be proper blanks sent out to-morrow," he said; "wait, my boys, another day, and then I hope I can accommodate you all. You all deserve better usage than what I am compelled to give you." Out by the side of the tent in which were stored the blankets, and acting as a guard over them and other property, was a good-natured German soldier. He had been indulging quite freely in his national bev-

erage, and had become more than naturally good-humored and sympathetic. We sat down beside him, and conversing with him as much as possible in his native language, soon won a good position in his esteem. Then we told him our anxiety to obtain a pair of blankets. "Von't the lieutenant borrow some of dem to you?" We explained that there were no blank papers for us to sign, on which condition only could they be obtained. "I drust you, anyway; you dake vat you vant—I drust you." We took a pair and went away. The following morning we took back to the lieutenant the borrowed pair, and asked him to keep them for us until night. We told him that we had "appropriated" them the day before from those which he had refused us. He was rather surprised, but assured us that we could have them each night until they could be formally issued to us.

For five days longer we remained at that camp; then I became so severely ill that a comrade aided me into a car going into Vicksburg one morning, and bidding adieu to those with whom I had been so long associated, and sundering the ties which hardships and despair and fears and hopes in common had made so strong, I started on the painful journey that required weeks for its accomplishment, and had for its goal the cherished village home in the bounteous Northwest.

## ADDRESSES OF ALL EX-CAHABA PRISONERS KNOWN.

| NAME.                    | Town.             | County.      | State. |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------|--------|
| Hiram Allison.....       | Muncie .....      | .....        | Ind.   |
| H. R. Andrews.....       | West Union.....   | .....        | Ia.    |
| L. G. Adair .....        | Terre Haute.....  | .....        | Ind.   |
| Stewart Axley.....       | Castalia.....     | .....        | Ia.    |
| James K. Ashley.....     | Rushville.....    | .....        | Ill.   |
| Balzer Appel.....        | Mt. Carroll.....  | Carroll..... | Ill.   |
| James R. Austin.....     | Syracuse .....    | .....        | N. Y.  |
| W. S. Boon.....          | Montpelia .....   | .....        | O.     |
| E. A. Butolph.....       | Cedar Rapids..... | .....        | Ia.    |
| H. J. Buffington.....    | Wetmore. ....     | .....        | Kan.   |
| John W. Brown.....       | Muncie .....      | .....        | Ind.   |
| David Bramner.....       | Muncie .....      | .....        | Ind.   |
| William A. Beer.....     | Ashland.....      | .....        | O.     |
| John Burns.....          | Rochester.....    | .....        | Minn.  |
| William Boor.....        | Sandusky.....     | .....        | O.     |
| M. L. Bussey.....        | Waterloo.....     | Douglas..... | Neb.   |
| Haskell M. Cole .....    | Adrian.....       | .....        | Mich.  |
| A. L. Call.....          | Dowell... ..      | .....        | Kan.   |
| J. W. Coates.....        | Coral .....       | Spink .....  | Dak.   |
| Ira F. Collins.....      | Sabetha.....      | .....        | Kan.   |
| David Chambers.....      | Marietta .....    | .....        | Ill.   |
| Alexander Campbell.....  | Edgerton.....     | .....        | Wis.   |
| M. Conners .....         | Davenport.....    | .....        | Ia.    |
| Ezra Cronkleton, Jr..... | Dunlap.....       | .....        | Ia.    |
| Emery Clark.....         | Esteline.....     | .....        | Dak.   |
| E. L. Courier.....       | Mellette .....    | Spink .....  | Dak.   |
| E. L. Chapman.....       | Webster.....      | .....        | Dak.   |
| William A. Cronk.....    | Lowe .....        | .....        | Kan.   |
| George W. Day.....       | Jefferson .....   | .....        | Ia.    |
| J. R. Dawson.....        | Concordia.....    | Cloud.....   | Kan.   |
| John Devine.....         | Columbus .....    | .....        | O.     |
| William C. Dillon.....   | Hallowell.....    | .....        | Kan.   |
| W. A. Fast.....          | Sedalia .....     | .....        | Mo.    |
| Don R. Frazier.....      | Mt. Carroll... .. | Carroll..... | Ill.   |

| NAME.                   | Town.               | County.             | State. |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|--------|
| T. A. Edgerton.....     | Garden City.....    | .....               | Minn.  |
| Daniel Garber.....      | Butler P. O.....    | .....               | O.     |
| R. W. Galbraith.....    | Indianapolis.....   | .....               | Ind.   |
| S. Graham.....          | Coffeeville.....    | .....               | Kan.   |
| E. A. Gere .....        | Advance .....       | Stoddard .....      | Mo.    |
| James Gordon .....      | Mill Brook.....     | .....               | Kan.   |
| Stephen M. Gaston.....  | Sherman .....       | .....               | Tex.   |
| Joseph George .....     | Alay.....           | Scott.....          | Ill.   |
| George C. Haight.....   | Loudon .....        | .....               | Mich.  |
| Levi Hartman.....       | Savannah .....      | Ashland .....       | O.     |
| D. Harman.....          | Defiance .....      | .....               | O.     |
| Jacob Helminger.....    | New Sharon .....    | Mahaska.....        | Ia.    |
| L. R. Hawes .....       | Sandusky .....      | .....               | O.     |
| Philip Henry .....      | Greeley.....        | .....               | Ia.    |
| W. C. Humphrey.....     | Middleton .....     | Butler .....        | O.     |
| Philip Horn .....       | Wooster.....        | .....               | O.     |
| Joseph L. Hott.....     | Mansfield.....      | .....               | O.     |
| John Hubbard.....       | Hudson .....        | .....               | Mich.  |
| Dr. R. N. Hall.....     | Chicago.....        | 676 W. Indiana St.. | Ill.   |
| Lewis Johnson.....      | Muncie.....         | .....               | Ind.   |
| P. M. Kent, Jr.....     | Brookton.....       | .....               | Ind.   |
| H. F. Knight.....       | Waterloo.....       | Jefferson.....      | Wis.   |
| Nelson Kirkpatrick..... | Shidler....         | Delaware.....       | Ind.   |
| H. J. Kline.....        | Millgrove .....     | .....               | Ind.   |
| William Koehler.....    | Rickardsville ..... | .....               | Ia.    |
| J. L. Lemaster.....     | Baker .....         | .....               | Kan.   |
| Charles Lewis .....     | West Gate.....      | .....               | Ia.    |
| George Loveless.....    | Menominee .....     | .....               | Wis.   |
| C. Lewis.....           | Mill P. O.....      | Fayette.....        | Ia.    |
| J. P. Little .....      | Ipava.....          | .....               | Ill.   |
| A. L. Marks.....        | Jewell City.....    | .....               | Kan.   |
| D. M. Maxon.....        | Bay City.....       | .....               | Mich.  |
| Simon McCullough.....   | West Point.....     | Decatur.....        | Ind.   |
| L. G. Morgan.....       | Findlay .....       | .....               | O.     |
| Henry Phelps .....      | Joplin.....         | .....               | Mo.    |



| NAME.                   | Town.               | County.                               | State. |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| William Peacock .....   | Muncie.....         | .....                                 | Ind.   |
| D. A. Prosser.....      | Kansas City.....    | 1331 East 18th St...                  | Mo.    |
| William Rinker.....     | Tassinong.....      | .....                                 | Ind.   |
| J. E. Rogerson .....    | Washington.....     | { Eastern Div. Pen-<br>sion Bureau. } | D. C.  |
| J. W. Rush.....         | Larned .....        |                                       |        |
| Henry Rouse.....        | Ottawa Lake .....   | Monroe .....                          | Mich.  |
| Truman M. Smith.....    | Grand Rapids. ....  | .....                                 | Mich.  |
| J. A. Scroggan.....     | Cargill .....       | .....                                 | Mo.    |
| J. P. Skea.....         | Cedar Rapids.....   | .....                                 | Ia.    |
| D. B. Summers.....      | Richland Centre ... | .....                                 | Wis.   |
| Miles Seeley.....       | Fond du Lac.....    | .....                                 | Wis.   |
| George W. Steward ..... | Wellington.....     | .....                                 | Kan.   |
| Joseph Stover.....      | Ashland .....       | .....                                 | O.     |
| Louis Strasser.....     | Columbus .....      | 482 E. Mound St...                    | O.     |
| George J. Trenaman .... | Rochester. ....     | 84 Cortlandt St....                   | N. Y.  |
| W. A. Traxler.....      | Butler P. O.....    | .....                                 | O.     |
| A. C. Tuthill .....     | Chicago.....        | 317 So. Clark St...                   | Ill.   |
| R. B. Thrapp .....      | Eureka .....        | .....                                 | Ill.   |
| W. Thayer.....          | Fairfield.....      | .....                                 | Mich.  |
| R. L. Turner .....      | Oskaloosa.....      | .....                                 | Ia.    |
| John Van Sickle.....    | Scranton.....       | .....                                 | Ia.    |
| M. C. White.....        | Hartford .....      | .....                                 | Mich.  |
| N. M. Wilson.....       | Marshalltown .....  | .....                                 | Ia.    |
| John L. Walker.....     | Hamilton.....       | .....                                 | O.     |
| John Windhorst.....     | Washington .....    | .....                                 | Kan.   |
| Frank Wright.....       | Adrian.....         | .....                                 | Mich.  |
| John Wasson.....        | Reno .....          | Ottawa.....                           | Mich.  |
| W. Scott Whitman.....   | New Albany.....     | .....                                 | Ind.   |
| Benjamin W. Warner....  | Kansas City.....    | 1201 Grand Ave....                    | Mo.    |

Total, 98.

NOTE.—While the above addresses are given for the information of persons interested, it should be stated that more than one-third of the letters addressed as above have been returned to the author by the postal authorities marked “unclaimed.” As the result of careful inquiry, I estimate that of the three thousand persons confined in Castle Morgan during the winter of 1864-65, more than twenty-five hundred were dead a year later, and less than seventy are now alive.









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